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Defense Weighs Strategy For Releasing Base Closure List

By George Cahlink

The Defense Department may not give Congress much advance notice about what military bases it wants to realign and close.

According to a Defense official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, lawmakers likely will receive base realignment and closure recommendations about an hour before Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld holds a press conference to announce them in early May. Those recommendations are expected to be hand-delivered to congressional offices, the official said.

The recommendations will be published on the Defense Department's Web site immediately following Rumsfeld's remarks. A separate Web site will be created to provide personnel information for federal employees whose bases are closing or whose jobs are being relocated.

Commanders of military installations could be given as much as 12 hours advance notice if their base is on the list.

Military communities across the nation are eagerly awaiting the announcement to find out if their bases will be closed or realigned. The Pentagon initially suggested that about a quarter of space on all military bases was unneeded, but Rumsfeld recently downplayed those comments, saying some of the space would be needed to accommodate troops relocating back to the United States from Europe.

Once the Pentagon recommendations are released, the independent Base Realignment and Closure commission, chaired by former Veteran Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi, will review them at public hearings, conduct its own analysis and make final recommendations to the president by Sept 8. If the president backs those recommendations, then Congress has 45 legislative days to reject or approve them in their entirety.

The Pentagon has formed a communications task force, headed by Dick McGraw, special assistant to the secretary of Defense, that is addressing concerns about the date on which the report will be released, who will be notified in advance, and how the actual list will be announced to military communities around the country. The Pentagon even hired a consulting firm, BearingPoint Inc., to assist in crafting its BRAC communications plan.

Federal law requires that the Defense Department publish a list of which bases it wants closed in the *Federal Register* no later than Monday, March 16, but that date will likely move up amid concerns that the information would leak out over the weekend before being published.

The Pentagon could release the list on the preceding Friday, but officials worry about headlines that might be created by releasing it on Friday the 13th. Options are being weighed to make the announcement as early as Tuesday, May 10, according to Defense officials and BRAC lobbyists.

Meanwhile, the independent Overseas Basing Commission will announce on May 10 its recommendations for how U.S. forces should be based overseas. The commission was appointed by Congress to assess whether overseas bases should be closed, realigned or established in new areas.

Al Corenella, a South Dakota businessman who heads the commission and served as a BRAC commission member in 1995, says the report originally was expected in August, but the release date was moved up so

that it could be considered in domestic base closure deliberations. Unlike the BRAC commissions, the overseas panel's recommendations are advisory only.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch
April 29, 2005
Pg. 1

Military Bases Make Their Case
Recommended closings will soon be public

By Philip Dine, Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau

CRYSTAL CITY, VA. -- With just two weeks to go before the country learns which military bases are recommended for closing -- and as Illinoisans nervously await the fate of Scott Air Force Base -- the pace at the new Base Realignment and Closure office here is growing more frenetic.

In a hastily thrown together sixth-floor suite, hand-drawn arrows taped to the walls lead to the commission's office, where dozens of newly hired employees are scrambling to compare bases even as some await basic equipment like computers and phone books.

The BRAC commissioners haven't even been sworn in yet, but their first public hearing is set for Tuesday on Capitol Hill to allow citizens, state officials and others to provide information the commission can use in its deliberations. They'll also be whisked behind closed doors for classified briefings from top military officials about how U.S. global military needs affect the issue of domestic bases.

Just a mile away at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has increased -- to daily -- the tempo of briefings he's getting from two panels he set up in 2002 to examine base closings from the perspective of cooperation among military services, intelligence, training, research and development, and other key areas.

Rumsfeld has to provide a recommended list of base closings to the BRAC Commission and to Congress by May 16, but he hopes to make it public by May 13 -- two weeks from today.

If history is a guide, most of the recommendations will be adopted. Billions of dollars in economic impact and employment could be at stake for communities around the country.

"This is critical. We're pulling out all the stops," Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich said Thursday.

Whether the intense lobbying will make a difference is unclear. But with crunch time at hand, and at least two bases in Illinois seen as potentially vulnerable -- Scott and the Rock Island Arsenal -- Blagojevich was in Washington on Thursday pressing the state's case. He huddled privately with House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., met twice with Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and had lunch with delegation members, including Reps. Jerry Costello, D-Ill., and John Shimkus, R-Ill., to talk about Scott and the other bases.

"We spent a lot of time discussing our plans to do everything we can so that in these base closings, Scott is spared," Blagojevich said. "It is absolutely essential we keep it open. It contributes \$1.5 billion to the state's economy and supports nearly 50,000 jobs."

Even as they wage an energetic -- and expensive -- campaign to keep Scott off Rumsfeld's list, Illinois officials are planning how to respond if Scott is recommended for closure: Push for an increase in Scott's missions at the expense of bases elsewhere.

"What we're proposing isn't just that we save Scott but that we actually expand it," Blagojevich said.

It's a complex battle that states like Illinois are waging, because of the number of decision-makers involved. Along with the BRAC commissioners and Rumsfeld, Congress and the White House will play major roles as the process winds into the autumn.

But the key decision looms in two weeks, when Rumsfeld makes his recommendations. Precedent suggests that about 85 percent of those on his list will remain there -- and be closed or downsized.

In Rumsfeld's view, about 20 percent of the military's capacity is excess. With 425 bases around the country, many observers have focused on the prospect that nearly 100 bases could be closed or sharply downsized. But the formula is actually more complex, because what the Defense Department is examining are its 3,000 properties, ranging from bases to training facilities, from the Pentagon to buildings in a host of cities.

The Illinois congressional delegation is working with Missouri legislators to push for Scott, and with Iowa's delegation on Rock Island. The state of Illinois and the cities of Peoria and Springfield are spending at least \$500,000 for lobbying and public relations efforts. The two cities are trying to protect National Guard wings.

"Just as with the folks for Scott Air Force Base, our hope is to keep the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria and the 183rd Fighter Wing in Springfield," said Roberta Parks, chief operating officer for the Peoria Chamber of Commerce. She is co-chairman for Peoria of the area's Base Retention Task Force. Rep. Ray LaHood, R-Ill., was instrumental in forging the joint effort.

"We feel like we've done everything we can do, so that gives us some comfort," said Gary Plummer, president of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. "We remain concerned, of course. We want to be prepared to react quickly once the report is issued."

Illinois officials and legislators are trying to take advantage of the presence of Illinoisan Sam Skinner on the nine-member BRAC Commission. Skinner served as U.S. transportation secretary in the administration of former President George Bush. Skinner was one of the two appointments that Hastert got to make; only one could be from Illinois.

Even if the news is good in two weeks for Scott supporters, they and boosters of other bases won't let up. They'll have to work to remain off the closure list, they say, because cities whose bases were targeted will work furiously to get off -- at somebody else's expense.

Miami Herald
May 1, 2005

Keeping Bases Open

The U.S. Is Considering Base Closures Again. Florida Hopes To Minimize The Damage.

By Bill Kaczor, Associated Press

PENSACOLA - When the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure Commission put Whiting Field, a naval air station in the Florida Panhandle, on its hit list, then-Gov. Lawton Chiles spoke with the panel's chairman. Whiting quickly came off the list.

Although current Gov. Jeb Bush has an important friend in the White House -- his brother, President Bush - neither Florida nor other states are expected to wield such clout in the 2005 BRAC process.

"This year's base closure legislation was written deliberately to avoid some of the [political] problems that cropped up in 1995," said Loren Thompson, a military specialist and chief operating officer of the Lexington Institute, a Washington, D.C., think tank.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld must release his BRAC proposal by May 16. A new commission appointed by President Bush then will have less than four months to make its recommendations to the president. In September, he will present the list to Congress, which must vote it up or down without change.

The governor's relationship with the president, Florida's strong military support and its 27 electoral votes will have some bearing but "are unlikely to be decisive," Thompson said.

Keeping politics out is fine with retired Adm. Robert J. Natter, a Jacksonville consultant managing Florida's campaign to protect the state's 21 bases and three unified commands.

Natter said Florida bases should benefit because they are high in military value, with lots of air, land and sea space, and many are used by more than one service, two leading criteria in this year's BRAC process.

That doesn't mean one or more Florida installation won't be targeted because the Pentagon is gunning to cut basing by up to 25 percent, Natter said.

"Our real strength lies in the integrity of the process and the people conducting the process," he said. "They know that if it gets political they will have failed as a commission."

Nevertheless, Natter has enlisted a couple of important political figures, former U.S. House Majority Leader Dick Armey and ex-Defense Secretary William Cohen, for his consulting team.

The state has paid \$600,000 to Natter's firm over the past 12 months and the meter is running at \$50,000 a month.

Thompson, however, expects consultants to have little influence because almost every state has them and the commissioners have little time for lobbyists due to their tight schedule. He expects them to look instead to the expertise of fellow commissioners.

One of the nine commissioners is a Florida resident, retired Army Gen. James T. Hill, who once headed the Miami-based Southern Command. More importantly, several commissioners have been stationed in Florida and are familiar with its bases, Natter said.

Florida also has spent more than \$25 million over five years to improve base infrastructure and help local communities prepare for BRAC.

State officials say it's a small price because the military ranks behind only tourism and agriculture in economic importance, pouring \$44 billion into Florida every year.

Natter said he's "cautiously optimistic" and outside experts agree.

"Compared with most places Florida looks pretty strong," Thompson said. "I'd sure rather have a base in Florida than in New England."

Location

High population density is a negative for some Florida bases, but the state's proximity to Latin America and the Middle East and the three unified commands are pluses, said Michael O'Hanlon, a defense expert with the Brookings Institution, another Washington think tank.

The Southern Command oversees operations in Latin America. The other two unified commands are at MacDill Air Force Base near Tampa. The Central Command focuses on the Middle East, including Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Special Operations Command controls all special forces.

One Florida base likely to be downsized, however, is Jacksonville Naval Air Station through closure of its aviation depot, which refurbishes aircraft, Thompson said. But, he said, the Jacksonville area could keep much of the depot's work and many of its 4,000 jobs at a commercial site.

Mayport Naval Station, also at Jacksonville, may face losses regardless of BRAC because the Navy plans to retire its only aircraft carrier, the steam-powered USS John F. Kennedy.

"That's probably going to become the lightning rod for all of Florida's complaints about base closure," Thompson said.

Florida politicians are trying to keep the Kennedy afloat and the Navy is studying whether to replace it at Mayport with a nuclear carrier, but the high cost makes that move unlikely, Thompson said.

Brookings' O'Hanlon said Mayport may be downsized but he doubted it would be closed.

"Jacksonville is very important for shipping forces quickly overseas in addition to whatever issues surround the carrier," he said.

Speculation also has swirled over MacDill and Patrick Air Force Base, which supports launches at the Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

Smaller, single-mission bases are vulnerable and the strength of Florida's other installations may hurt Patrick if geographic diversity becomes an issue, O'Hanlon said.

High housing costs, aging facilities and a small flying contingent of 12 tankers and three business jets work against MacDill, but O'Hanlon doubted it would close because of the unified commands.

Whiting Field remains a potential target although it handles all Navy helicopter training and most of its primary fixed-wing training.

Alabama politicians want the helicopters moved to Fort Rucker in their state, where the Army trains chopper pilots. Another worry is shifting Navy flight training to the Air Force.

Neither seems likely to Thompson because the Navy needs pilots trained to fly over water and coastal areas. Also, those moves may cost more than they save, he said.

Importance of Eglin

Florida biggest asset, in more ways than one, is Eglin Air Force Base, which sprawls across 724 square miles of the Panhandle and has vast ranges in the Gulf of Mexico. Eglin is a center for weapons development and testing and hosts training by all services, enhancing the value of other Florida bases.

"Eglin Air Force Base is about as invulnerable as a base can be," Thompson said. "It is so capable and so critical to the mission of the joint force, the only question in my mind is how many jobs it will gain, not whether it will lose any."

St. Louis Post-Dispatch
April 30, 2005

Panel Judges Bases' Military Value

By Harry Levins, Post-Dispatch Senior Writer

Ask defense analysts whether Scott Air Force Base will be on this month's list of bases that the Pentagon wants to close, and most will decline to speculate.

They shy away from predicting whether this or that base might get the ax. But they offer some general insights into the process, Base Realignment and Closure, known as BRAC.

Among them is retired Navy Capt. Ken Beeks, the BRAC specialist at the Washington-based Business Executives for National Security.

"The primary consideration is military value," Beeks says. "That's Priority A. Everything else is a distant B.

"In the grand scheme of things, you always get back to military value: 'What's the military purpose of what we're doing here?'"

So what's the military value of Scott? Is the base a gem, or is it an also-ran?

The answer depends on who's doing the defining.

"We're feeling optimistic"

"I can't imagine their closing Scott," says aviation historian (and former bomber pilot) Walter Boyne, an East St. Louis native.

His reasoning: "It's centrally located, it's modernized and it's one of the country's most important command headquarters."

But others rate Scott's chances as dicey. Retired fighter pilot Mike Rooney of Owensville, Mo., has a pithy summary of what many people are thinking: "Scott's mission can be conducted from *any* base."

For all of its runways, hangars and 13,065 military people and civilian workers, Scott's main mission is to be a headquarters. Scott houses the people who run the all-service U.S. Transportation Command and its airlift-tanker subsidiary, the Air Mobility Command.

Mostly, those people work at desks with computers and telephones. That makes Scott the military equivalent of a corporate headquarters, which can easily pick up and move.

True, Scott also houses airplanes and the people who fly them. But the base has only 25 airplanes. Nine are Air National Guard refueling tankers - planes that would probably stay at Scott even if the BRAC act fell. The rest are small transports that could find a home at almost any base.

But Scott can handle a lot more flying than it could 10 years ago, when it barely escaped the last BRAC list. Back then, Scott had just one runway, just 6,800 feet long.

Today, that runway stretches for 8,000 feet. And it parallels a new 10,000-foot runway at Scott's new neighbor, MidAmerica Airport.

"Scott has the capacity to accept other missions," says Jim Pennekamp of the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois, which is scrapping to save Scott. "We're feeling optimistic about Scott. We think we'll see it grow."

Trouble is, as contributing editor John Correll of Air Force magazine says, "In terms of people and airplanes, it's a smaller Air Force - much smaller than its Cold War peak."

The Pentagon is talking about bringing home 70,000 people now stationed abroad in Germany and Korea. In theory, Scott could become the new home for some of them.

But in practice, most of those coming home will be soldiers. And analyst Beeks says, "I don't think they'd bring home an infantry unit and put it on an air force base," which lacks land for firing ranges and maneuver areas. (Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., takes in about 100 square miles. Scott tucks into a mere five.)

Also open to debate is Scott's mid-country locale. Historian Boyne sees that as a plus, as does Pennekamp. "In part, it's a cost-of-living issue," says Pennekamp.

Others note the Air Force's transformation into an expeditionary force - one that's based in the United States but can wing in a hurry to overseas locales. In that kind of system, planes on the East or West Coast have a head start in getting overseas.

Still others come down in between. Think-tank analyst Christopher Hellman of the Washington-based Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation cites Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo. - home of the B-2 Stealth bomber, and universally considered safe from closing.

Hellman says, "Whiteman is in the middle of the country. There are no absolutes in this thing."

The bright side

If anything nudges close to an absolute, it's the issues of encroachment and jointness. On both counts, boosters like Pennekamp place Scott on the bright side.

He says governments on the state, county and local levels have taken pains to keep a buffer zone between Scott and the development that's marching eastward along Interstate 64.

The Pentagon is wary of encroachment by developers. The reason: Sooner or later, the people who move in next to a military base complain about military mud, dust and noise.

Jointness is another plus for Pennekamp. When he looks at the list of criteria the Pentagon is using to rate bases, he stabs a finger at Priority No. 1, which includes the phrase "joint warfighting."

Jointness is the military term for razing service rivalries so that the various branches can pull together to win wars quickly. Pennekamp says, "Scott has a major joint command - the U.S. Transportation Command," which clusters people from all four services, plus the Coast Guard.

Analyst Hellman says, "Jointness is easiest in noncombat base settings, where it doesn't matter whether the guy in the next cubicle is wearing a blue uniform or a green uniform." Beeks says, "Most joint bases are headquarters or support operations." That would seem to augur well for Scott.

But much of Scott is office space. Hellman says that when the people who are trying to close bases look at office and warehouse complexes, "They'll ask, 'Does the Navy *have* to own that building?' Could you put the Air Mobility Command headquarters on an Army post? Sure. Why not?"

Ask Beeks whether there's much military value in a base that's mostly offices, and he answers: "We'll find out. I think that's an area people are taking a hard look at."

Still, this month's BRAC list is hardly the last word. Instead, it's the Pentagon's wish list, expected to be announced late next week. The final recommendations to the president are up to an appointed BRAC commission, which can overrule the Pentagon.

So if Scott turns up on the list, its backers have four months to sway the commission. But past commissions have gone along with the Pentagon about 85 percent of the time, so the odds are long.

San Diego Union-Tribune
May 1, 2005

Base-Closure Panel To Get First Briefings

By Otto Kreisher, Copley News Service

WASHINGTON – The Base Realignment and Closure process will go into high gear Tuesday with briefings for the new nine-member commission.

The commission will start with an open meeting Tuesday morning on Capitol Hill during which base-closing experts will explain the law and the process that they will follow.

Then will come closed briefings by intelligence officials and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the strategies that are shaping the decisions on which facilities will be closed, reduced or enhanced.

The sessions are intended to prepare the commissioners for the real work, which starts with the release of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's recommendations for base closures and adjustments to defense installations across the country.

The list may be released as early as May 12, igniting a politically charged process that will determine by year's end the fate of scores of military facilities and the thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on them.

The Defense Department has reported that it has about 24 percent excess capacity.

However, Rumsfeld and others have said that does not mean 24 percent of all facilities will be cut.

The reduction will be softened, particularly for the Army, by the return of 70,000 U.S. troops and 100,000 dependents from foreign bases.

Once the commission has Rumsfeld's recommendations, it will hold hearings in Washington and around the nation to hear from communities that might be affected.

Commission Chairman Anthony Principi, a former San Diegan, has promised that at least one commissioner will visit every base recommended for closure.

The commission must submit its response to Rumsfeld's list by Sept. 8. In its report, the panel has the option of challenging the secretary's recommendations.

The commission could also add facilities to the list, which its predecessors have done occasionally. Seven of the nine commissioners must approve a decision to add anything.

After the commission acts, President Bush must decide by Sept. 23 whether to accept or reject its recommendations. He cannot make any changes.

If Bush rejects the list, the commission must consider his views and resubmit the list.

After the president accepts the commission's recommendations, he will send them to Congress, which also must accept or reject them in total within 45 days.

Chicago Tribune
May 1, 2005

Illinois Fights To Keep Bases Off Military's Closing List

By Stephen J. Hedges and Rudolph Bush, Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- It has been years since the Rock Island Arsenal has been as busy as it is today. Running at 75 percent capacity--the recent norm was 20 percent--the U.S. Army industrial site is churning out armor plating and machine-gun mounts, all thanks to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So it is with particular irony that the arsenal, established after the Civil War on a 946-acre island between the Mississippi River banks of Illinois and Iowa, is finding its way onto a number of short lists of military bases that could soon close.

"You will pick up these rumors before a facility appears on a base closure list," said Rep. Mark Kirk, a Highland Park Republican who deals with military issues on the House Appropriations Committee.

The rumors swirling around Rock Island Arsenal and another Illinois military mainstay, Scott Air Force Base near St. Louis, are "pretty warm," Kirk said.

Others close to the base-closing debate say that Scott's closure would be difficult to imagine; it is home to the Air Force's transportation and air mobility commands, which direct cargo and aerial refueling flights worldwide.

Rock Island, though, has survived four base closings since 1988. And the new round, set to begin in two weeks, will emphasize shifting defense work to private contractors.

The Pentagon has said it will save \$7 billion annually when it reduces by 25 percent the capacity of its domestic military bases, a careful phrasing that leaves substantial wiggle room to close or consolidate facilities.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld must release his choices of those bases that will be closed or shrunk by May 16. A nine-member Base Realignment and Closure Commission appointed by the president then has until Sept. 23 to review Rumsfeld's choices.

The commission will forward its own list for President Bush's approval by Sept. 23. And Bush has until Oct. 20 to either endorse the entire list or return it to the commission for review; he can't make selective cuts.

Congress has a final, but limited, say, with 45 days after the president approves the list to object. If it takes no action, the closings will be final.

There's more than military readiness at stake. Communities have for years relied on the jobs and revenue that the bases generate. They've spent millions of dollars on Washington lobbyists to save their bases.

Illinois has five major military bases: Rock Island, Scott, Illinois Air National Guard posts in Springfield and Peoria and the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in North Chicago. State officials say the bases provide direct or indirect employment to more than 72,000 people and have an estimated annual economic impact of about \$2.7 billion.

Earlier rounds of closings--in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995--affected nearly 100 facilities. Rumsfeld's office has played a far more prominent role this time around in choosing which bases will be cut and how the others will fare.

The choices are complicated by the return of about 70,000 service members from overseas.

Towns lobby for bases

For some communities, fighting off the Pentagon cuts has become a full-time endeavor.

The Air Force base at Minot, N.D., did not make the closing list 10 years ago, but it almost did.

"That really got our attention," said Minot Mayor Curt Zimbleman. "We decided at that point that there would be another BRAC coming and that we would be prepared."

Since then, he said, the city has spent "hundreds of thousands of dollars" to keep a Washington, D.C.-based consultant, a retired Air Force general, watching out for the base's interests. The base, which is responsible for 150 Minuteman III nuclear missiles as well as B-52 bombers, brings in about \$355 million annually--a quarter of the community's revenue--and employs 4,940 active military personnel and 1,042 civilians.

In Houston, the Ellington Field Task Force, a collection of business and community leaders, and veterans, has spent the last two years working to move other local military activities onto Ellington Field, a joint civilian and military airport.

Today the field is home to NASA aircraft, U.S. Coast Guard helicopters, the Texas Air National Guard's 147th Fighter Wing and the Texas Army National Guard. It generates \$350 million in annual revenue, and local leaders hope the consolidations will protect it from the Pentagon's ax.

"It's such an odd thing, because rationally I understand what the Department of Defense is trying to do," said Marie McDermott, vice president of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership and chairwoman of the Ellington Field Task Force. "I support that. But then it just comes back to your community and relying on people in Washington who are making decisions about your community, and it's frightening."

Philip Grone, the deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment who is heading up this BRAC round, said the Pentagon's final cut of bases will be based strictly on the military's needs, not community concerns.

"Key to the BRAC process is not the personal relationships and associations, or what folks will tell you in an uncertified way," Grone said. "It's the very clear military analysis of [what] we're doing."

Illinois has had mixed results in trying to stave off closings in the past.

Life after closings

In 1988, Ft. Sheridan in Lake County and Chanute Air Force Base in Downstate Rantoul wound up on the closing list, and in 1993, the Naval Air Station in Glenview was marked for shutdown.

Former Sen. Alan Dixon (D-Ill.), who in 1995 was chairman of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, said that although the closings seemed painful at the time, the state ultimately benefited. "Ft. Sheridan has since been developed into a very significant and beautiful residential area," he said.

And in Glenview, a large part of the community wanted the base to close, he said. "Chanute was a closer question because Chanute was in a smaller area of our state, and everybody said when that happened that Rantoul would close," Dixon added.

Rantoul, of course, did not die out but developed an industrial park in place of the base.

This time around, Illinois has spent some \$320,000 to lobby the base closing commission on behalf of Scott and Rock Island, and state officials say they feel confident about their chances.

"We feel optimistic about all of the bases," said Jack Lavin, director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. "We think there is a story to be told about each of the bases and what their value is to the military."

Among the state's elected officials, House Speaker Dennis Hastert has so far played the most direct role in the closings, simply because his job allows him to recommend two members of the commission. He chose former Transportation Secretary Sam Skinner, a Chicago attorney, and former Rep. James Hansen, a Utah Republican. Both are considered sympathetic to Illinois' cause.

Skinner said that the commission members haven't seen the Pentagon list and that the commission is still getting organized, with meetings starting this week in Washington.

"Last year the Defense Department indicated that as many as 25 percent of their over 400 bases might be on the list," Skinner said. "But they've since indicated, as the result of the troop reductions in Europe, that the percentage may drop significantly."

The state, along with the non-profit Rock Island Arsenal Development Group, has pitched the arsenal as worth saving because it serves as a safety net in times of military need. It is one of only a few bases dedicated to manufacturing, supporters note, adding that it can quickly turn out materials such as armor for Humvees for less than private industry.

"The arsenal here is here for insurance reasons," said Jim Morgan, program director for the Rock Island Arsenal Development Group. "When a balloon goes up and war comes about, a lot of industries do not have the capacity to expand to meet some of [the military's] needs."

The state has also taken unusual steps to protect the two Air National Guard units in Peoria and Springfield. Hastert, Assistant Senate Minority Leader Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Republican Rep. Ray LaHood from East Peoria have sent Rumsfeld a letter suggesting that it would be illegal to close the units without approval from Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Orlando Sentinel, The (FL)
May 1, 2005

Florida's assets could stymie base closures
The state is close to world hot spots and is home to 3 major commands.

By Bill Kaczor

PENSACOLA -- When the 1995 **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission put Whiting Field, a naval air station in the Florida Panhandle, on its hit list, then-Gov. Lawton Chiles spoke with the panel's chairman. Whiting quickly came off the list.

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Portland Press Herald (ME)
April 29, 2005

Defense of bases relies on their value - Advocates and officials sharpen their campaign to save the Kittery and Brunswick bases.

By Bart Jansen

Gov. John Baldacci met on Thursday with Maine's congressional delegation and members of advocacy groups to strategize to prevent **closures** of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery and the Brunswick Naval Air Station. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has a May 16 deadline to announce which **bases** he proposes to close to save money. Communities nationwide are bracing for his list because he has threatened to close as many as one-fourth of the 425 U.S. **bases**.

Because all communities are expected to complain about the economic losses from **closures**, Baldacci and the lawmakers concentrated on the importance of both **bases** for national defense and homeland security.

"They're absolutely vital to the future defense of our country," said U.S. Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, who hosted the meeting at her Capitol Hill office.

Also at the meeting were Paul O'Connor and retired Capt. Bill McDonough of the Seacoast Shipyard Association, supporting the Portsmouth yard; Rick Tetrev, chairman of the Brunswick task force; and Elmer Harmon of the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station in Cutler.

Advocates have highlighted Portsmouth's record for repairing nuclear submarines at less cost and in less time than the Navy expects.

Brunswick, home of P-3 Orion surveillance planes, is the only active air **base** in the Northeast.

"No other **base** can make those claims. Those are facts," said U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, a member of the Armed Services Committee. "Similarly, Brunswick remains the last active-duty air **base** in the Northeast. That's a fact. Brunswick also has an emerging role to play when it comes to homeland security,

with maritime surveillance and interdiction becoming more important. We have a very strong case to make."

The **closure** of either **base** would be devastating to the regional economy and to the state. Portsmouth has 4,800 workers and a \$318 million payroll. The air station employs 5,227, with a total payroll of \$147 million.

U.S. Rep. Tom Allen, D-Maine, acknowledged that every state would make an economic argument, but that Portsmouth has worked over the last six years to make itself the most efficient shipyard in the country.

"What we are relying on are the national security and homeland defense arguments," Allen said. "We believe, in both cases - in Kittery and Brunswick - we have very strong cases to make on the merits."

Before the delegation meeting, Baldacci met with Anthony Principi, chairman of the nine-member commission that will review Rumsfeld's recommendations.

Mainers voiced disappointment last month that the commission included no one from the Northeast. But Baldacci, who served eight years in the House, knows Principi, who was a secretary of veterans affairs.

Baldacci said Principi is familiar with Maine **bases** and met an associate of Adm. Hyman Rickover, who is considered the father of the nuclear submarine fleet and who strongly endorsed Portsmouth's work.

"He had mentioned how much the hull work at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is revered and how much credit should be given to that shipyard," Baldacci said.

U.S. Rep. Mike Michaud, D-Maine, a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, voiced "every confidence" in Principi, who he said will give Maine a fair hearing if its **bases** are recommended for **closure**.

"He's not going to let politics get involved in the process," Michaud said. "He's going to look at the facts."

Lawmakers have written dozens of letters to the Pentagon to support the **bases** and have held meetings and rallies in Maine and Washington.

"Even laboring under the unpredictability and uncertainty of this process, the workers are continuing to perform in an unsurpassed fashion," Snowe said. "We're here to coordinate with the leaders of the community to make sure that we can hit the ground running in the event something comes to pass."

Union Leader, The (Manchester, NH)
April 29, 2005

NH lost most active duty personnel in base closings

By Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON -- New England has been hit the hardest by military **base** closings, losing more than 58 percent of its active duty personnel between 1997 and 2002, according to a report compiled by the Northeast-Midwest Institute.

New Hampshire suffered the biggest decline, losing 92 percent of its active military, while Massachusetts lost 74 percent, Maine lost 54 percent, and Connecticut lost 41 percent.

The report comes as the Pentagon is preparing to release its fifth and latest round of recommended **base** closings in about two weeks. And lawmakers said it shows that New England has suffered enough.

According to the institute's report, the 18 states in the Northeast and Midwest hold 40 percent of the nation's population, but account for just slightly more than 10 percent of the country's active duty Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine personnel.

"It's no wonder that recruitment for the services is down," said Rep. Marty Meehan, D-Mass., and co-chairman of the Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition. "The Pentagon has basically ceded the Northeast and Midwest."

New England's six states have lost nearly 18,000 active military personnel, with three of the states in the top ten hardest hit: New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Maine, ranked first, fifth and seventh.

"The defense presence is skewed to the West and even more so to the South," said the report, which was released yesterday. And noting that there are a number of densely populated areas, the report concluded that it would not make sense to further reduce the military in the already vulnerable Northeast and Midwest.

Meehan said he is urging the **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission to take a hard look before taking another bite out of the two regions, because it may leave them less able to defend against a terrorist attack.

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Pensacola News Journal (FL)
April 29, 2005

Area officials shore up defenses with base closure list on the way BRAC to make recommendations public on May 16

By Derek Pivnick and Brett Norman

Area politicians were updated Thursday about efforts to prevent the region's military **bases** from being axed this year.

The update comes just more than two weeks before the scheduled May 16 release of the list of recommended facility **closures** from the **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission.

Years of land-use studies and property purchases to prevent possible residential encroachment around military **bases** will be tested in the struggle to stay off the list. After BRAC receives the recommendations, interested parties will have three months to lobby commission members for changes.

Members of the Military Regional Oversight Committee said they've done everything possible to keep area military installations open, but they still are prepared to fight.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has pledged to close up to 25 percent of the nation's military installations. Florida has 21 **bases**.

Retired Vice Adm. Jack Fetterman said the oversight panel has prepared a presentation in the event that helicopter training at Whiting Field is targeted -- a perennial fear.

"I stress that that's a hypothetical," he said at an Escambia County Commission committee meeting also attended by four Pensacola City Council members.

He pledged to fight during the three-month lobbying period to bring more military missions to the area.

Oversight committee officials also updated the Santa Rosa County Commission on Thursday on what the panel is doing to prevent the region's military installations from being axed this year.

"I think at the local level we've done about as much as we can do," said Commissioner Don Salter, former chairman of the oversight committee.

The committee worked to develop the Florida Defense Alliance, giving Escambia and Santa Rosa counties a single voice in promoting local military **bases**, said Pete Gandy, chief executive officer at Santa Rosa Medical Center in Milton and current oversight committee chairman.

Salter said the county has helped preserve or is working to purchase thousands of acres surrounding military installations in the county to prevent encroachment, which often can create conflicts and make a **base** vulnerable.

Whiting Field accounts for 15 percent of worldwide flight time for the Navy and Marines every year, conducts about 60 percent of the Navy's primary flight training and 100 percent of advanced flight training for Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard helicopter pilots. International flight students from allied countries also train there.

The biggest threat to Santa Rosa County in this round of **base closures** is from other joint training **bases** because the trend now is to consolidate training, Salter said.

"I hope we end up being a receiver of some of that joint training," he said.

"I think at the local level we've done about

as much as we can do."

Don Salter, Santa Rosa County commissioner and former

Military Regional Oversight Committee chairman

Protective measures

Efforts to buffer Whiting Field Naval Air Station include:

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails this year approved including 1,100 acres of land surrounding Whiting Field Naval Air Station for a preservation program. It's part of a larger 5,800-acre preservation project around Whiting Field that's awaiting funding.

The county kept talks going between a private land owner and the Northwest Florida Water Management District, which in 2002 purchased about 1,200 acres of land near the Choctaw Outlying Landing Field, northeast of Holley.

*The county plans to develop an aviation-based commerce park on 260 acres of land southeast of Whiting Field. The commercial area will not interrupt **base** operations but will help prevent residential encroachment.

Day, The (New London, CT)
April 29, 2005

Report says Northeast can't afford to lose any more military bases - Group promoting region in base-closure process

By Robert A. Hamilton

A new report by a nonprofit group that promotes the Northeast and Midwest concludes that the brunt of military cutbacks has fallen so heavily on those areas in the past that they should be spared in the 2005 **Base Realignment** and **Closure** or BRAC process.

The report by the Washington, D.C.-based Northeast-Midwest Institute, which has strong ties to members of Congress from the region, found that the 18 states it represents lost 40 percent of their active duty personnel, compared to 24 percent nationally.

As a result, though those states account for 40 percent of the national population, they host just 10.9 percent of the military, fewer than either Texas or California alone.

Only 7.4 percent of the active-duty members of the military are stationed in the Northeast, home to about 21 percent of the total U.S. population.

"While it would make little sense to distribute military personnel throughout the country simply for the sake of geographic balance, it also would make little sense to further reduce the already small share of military personnel in the vulnerable Northeast-Midwest," the report states.

"The Defense Department and the 2005 BRAC Commission should steer clear of **base** closings and deep cuts in military personnel for the Northeast-Midwest region in 2005 and beyond," it continues.

But the report also notes that the cuts will likely fall most heavily on the Northeast and Midwest again. Most often mentioned as candidates for **closure** are Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and Brunswick Naval Air Station in Maine and Hanscom Air Force **Base** in Massachusetts.

Defense sources seem less willing to predict the fate of the Naval Submarine **Base** in Groton, which members of the Subbase **Realignment** Coalition are trying to save.

"Certainly, this report provides ammunition to people who want to rally around the defense establishment that's left in New England," said Coalition Chairman John C. Markowicz, who is also president of the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region, a regional development group.

He noted that in the 1990s alone, more than 25,000 jobs swung from defense and related high-technology manufacturing to tourism and entertainment, "a tectonic shift in the economy of southeastern Connecticut."

Markowicz noted he grew up in Salem, Mass., near the Navy Reserve Center, the Charleston Navy Yard, and the South Boston Navy Annex, which are all gone. Early in his Navy career he was at Newport, R.I., where the Navy maintained a tender and a squadron of destroyers, also gone, and when he first came to New London there was a squadron of submarines and a tender at what is now Adm. Harold E. Shear State Pier, not to mention a large contingent of ballistic-missile submarine crews in Groton.

"We tend to forget how much is gone," Markowicz said.

The state's congressional delegation, eager to keep the Groton **base** off the **closure** list, embraced the report as well.

The **base**, "helps provide critically important Naval muscle for our national defense," said U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn. "It simply doesn't make sense to cut into this vital military component, especially considering this report's finding that Northeast military facilities have already been cut to the bone."

"This important report provides more solid evidence for why the New London submarine **base** must stay open for business," said U.S. Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman. "It is critical to the security of our state, our region, and our country that Connecticut's unique military capabilities not be further downgraded in the current **base closure** round.

"It is also vitally important that no region become disconnected from our military," Lieberman said. "The Northeast has paid a disproportionate price in the past. We deserve more support from our military, not less. The BRAC Commissioners should heed this revealing report."

U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, said the report makes a compelling case because it has the statistics to prove the region has already given up enough. For the save-the-**base** effort, he said, "This is just another arrow in the quiver, but it's a pretty big arrow."

"And when you consider that in our case, the military presence is a critical contributing factor to the industrial **base** that produces the best submarines in the world, it's a real wake-up call," Simmons said. He has requested meetings with members of the BRAC commission, "and I look forward to presenting some of this information to them, as well as to people over at the Pentagon."

The list of recommended **closures** is expected to be released as early as May 10 but no later than May 13.

Boston Globe, The (MA)
April 28, 2005

NATICK LABS SEEN LESS AT RISK

By Davis Bushnell

The US Soldier Systems Center in Natick appears more likely to avoid the chopping block than Hanscom Air Force **Base** in Bedford, according to two men leading the lobbying to keep the **bases** open.

The systems center, known as Natick Labs, has created a niche for itself by researching such things as military apparel and food, James Owsley and Alan Dixon of 20th Century Alliance said in separate telephone interviews last week.

In addition, because of the demands of deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, Army installations are generally not high on the Pentagon's **base**-closing list, said Dixon, a former US senator from Illinois.

By contrast, Hanscom, portions of which are in Lincoln, may be more vulnerable because it does not fit the Air Force's traditional bias toward **bases** that have fighter wings, they said.

Still, both men said they are optimistic Hanscom will be saved because of its work on electronic warfare and the state Legislature's support for expanding both the Bedford and Natick complexes.

The latest indications are that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will submit his recommended list of military **base** closings to the nine-member **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission on May 13, or three days before the filing deadline, said Owsley, who is the principal of Chicago-based 20th Century Alliance. Four months later, the commission will forward recommendations to President Bush, who will make the final decisions.

The Pentagon has said that as many as one-fourth of the nation's military installations could close.

"Hanscom is vital simply because it is the brain center" of military technology, said Dixon.

Also, the political clout of Senators Edward M. Kennedy and John F. Kerry shouldn't be underestimated in the save-Hanscom campaign, Dixon said. "Those are two guys you'd rather not give you trouble," he said.

Kennedy is cochairman with Governor Mitt Romney of the Massachusetts Defense Technology Initiative, the state's lobbying arm. Both have made presentations in Washington and at Air Force and Army command centers around the country.

The technology initiative retained Owsley's firm, whose other partner is retired Air Force Chief of Staff Ronald R. Fogelman. Contract terms have not been revealed.

Politics will also come into play when the **base closure** commission convenes, because all nine members are presidential appointees, Dixon acknowledged with a caveat. "In 1995, we had admirals and generals [on the commission] who were independent thinkers on some matters," he recalled.

Of the current commissioners, only retired Air Force General Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton has a connection to New England. He is executive vice president-military engines of Pratt & Whitney.

If either Hanscom or the Army's Soldier Systems Center in Natick, or both, should be on the Pentagon's **base realignment** and **closure** list, Massachusetts officials hope Newton and the other commissioners will visit the facilities, Owsley said.

But that's uncertain, he said, because they'll need assistance from new staff members in digesting "one of the most massive data-gathering efforts by the Pentagon in years."

In contrast, staff members were well in place for the **base closure** rounds of 1991 and 1995, Owsley said, noting, "Now staff members are having to start from the ground up."

Owsley said he visited the Hanscom **base** in 1995 as part of a nationwide review of military laboratories or research centers. But the Pentagon dropped the option of realigning or closing these facilities and, as a result, Hanscom didn't appear on the **base closure** list, he said.

Although it could happen, "it's hard to imagine today that Hanscom and other large, vital **bases** would be closed, given the environment" since Sept. 11, 2001, said Dixon.

Post-Standard, The (Syracuse, NY)
April 28, 2005

BOARD SHOWS SUPPORT FOR AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE - DEFENSE DEPARTMENT IS LOOKING TO CLOSE SEVERAL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.

By BoNhia Lee

The Salina Town Board passed a resolution Monday stating its support to keep Hancock Field Air National Guard **Base** from closing.

"I know I would hate to see the 174th (Fighter Wing) shut down," said Supervisor Mary Ann Schadt.

Third Ward Counselor Michael Giarrusso lives in Mattydale near the air field and said he would miss it, too.

Hancock and other **bases** around the nation are being reviewed, because the Department of Defense wants to close nearly 25 percent of the nation's military installations. The **base realignment** and **closure** process is known as BRAC. And for the first time the defense department is targeting Air Guard **bases**.

Lori Dietz, of the Metropolitan Development Association, spoke to the town board about the Hancock Military Affairs Community Council. The council is a group that was formed to advocate on behalf of the **base**. Salina is one of many stops along the way to raise awareness and support.

More than 2,000 people are employed at the **base**, Dietz told the board and town residents. The **base** spends \$6.5 million a year on goods from the community and its total economic impact totals \$110 million, she said.

Dietz also discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the **base**.

"We have a great location strategically for homeland defense," Dietz said.

But the **base** uses F-16 fighter jets which will gradually be phased out by the government, she said.

If Hancock is placed on the list to be closed, the community council would hold a rally sometime this summer to show the BRAC commissioners how important the **base** is to the community.

In other action

The town board approved the purchase of a fuel management system for the highway department. The system allows the department to keep track of fuel distribution and pumps at various locations around town.

The current system was installed in 1994 and has led to problems for the last three years, said Highway Superintendent James Whitehead.

The new program will cost \$8,680.

Journal Gazette, The (Fort Wayne, IN)
April 28, 2005

Mayor upbeat on Air Guard base - Washington visit stresses benefits of airfield to the military

By Sylvia A. Smith

Mayor Graham Richard said he left the Pentagon on Wednesday morning feeling upbeat that the Air National Guard **base** in Fort Wayne will be spared as the military prepares to announce which facilities it wants to mothball or consolidate.

But Rep. Mark Souder, R-3rd, said there's no way to know.

"It was a good meeting; we got positive feedback. There are multiple decision-makers. But there is no way we could tell one way or another because this individual is merely just one individual in part of a bigger process," Souder said. "But it was a good meeting."

Richard flew to Washington for the 30-minute meeting, arranged by Souder as part of the region's lobbying campaign to keep the **base** off the list.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has said he wants to reduce 20 percent of the military's capacity in the last phase of the Pentagon's effort to reconfigure the military's Cold War-era force structure and save \$6.5 billion a year.

A list of the **bases** Rumsfeld wants to close or merge will be published May 16. However, the announcement could come as early as the week of May 9. A non-partisan commission will review the list, conduct public hearings and visit **bases** before making final recommendations to the president and Congress in September. Congress will be able to approve or reject the list but will not be able to add or delete **bases**.

Richard, Souder, County Commissioner Marla Irving; Rob Young, executive director of the Fort Wayne Allen County Economic Alliance; and a Souder aide met with Philip Grone, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment and the Pentagon's point man for the **base realignment** and **closure** process.

More than 300 full-time jobs are tied to the 122nd Fighter Wing, based at the airport. The **base** estimated it injects \$54 million a year into the regional economy. But the delegation that met with Grone didn't emphasize the economic loss to the region if the **base** is pulled out.

Instead, they argued the case that keeping the **base** open would benefit the military.

Irving said there's plenty of room at the airport for expansion if the Guard needs more space, including room for a second 12,000-foot runway to accommodate big military jets.

Young reviewed the cluster of area defense manufacturers who are able to make the equipment the military needs as well as provide personnel. Richard said he pointed to the area's training facilities and the region's support for the military. Souder noted that in the past few years, Congress has invested \$39 million in **base** and airport upgrades.

"We stressed our assets," Irving said.

Communities across the country are doing the same sorts of things. Gov. Mitch Daniels, for instance, has hired a \$15,000-a-month lobbyist - former Sen. Dan Coats - to try to ensure that the state's major military facility - Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center southwest of Bloomington that employs 4,000 - is not on the list.

Opinion

Virginian-Pilot, The (Norfolk, VA)
April 28, 2005

Despite criticism, CCAJN won't "fold its hand"

BY JOHN SHICK

The suggestion that Oceana be considered for **base realignment** - not **closure** - made by Citizens Concerned About Jet Noise has caused the local "establishment" to circle the wagons, protesting excitedly that such a proposal is irresponsible, that the 6,000 acres at Oceana (and thousands more at Fentress) have only a single military purpose: to support fighter aircraft. There's also a suggestion that the mere utterance of the word "**realignment**" dooms Oceana to **closure** and the area to economic purgatory. Red herrings all!

Your editorial of April 16 asserts that CCAJN "overplayed its hand" in modifying its long-held position of not advocating the **closure** of Oceana by asking the Department of Defense to critically assess the pros and cons of **realignment**.

What the editorial probably wanted was for CCAJN to simply fold its hand.

Indeed, CCAJN, in its efforts to find reasonable and responsible solutions to the quality of life impacts in Navy aircraft operations, recognized that failing to do so would jeopardize the long-term viability of Oceana as a master jet **base**. There has been no stronger voice, except of the Navy itself, in publicly speaking out against residential encroachment on Oceana. None.

The Pilot, however, apparently believes either that concerns regarding Oceana aircraft operations no longer exist, or, in grudging concession, that the public can rely upon the selfless good offices of the city of Virginia Beach and the business community to resolve existing quality of life, health, safety and encroachment issues, objectively and responsibly.

Both views are wrong. Regrettably, past council behavior - and lack of vision - do not favor such optimism.

A **realignment** of Oceana, in theory, would involve the transfer of aircraft and aircraft operations to a **base** where encroachment and long-term growth expectations are minimal and manageable. In compensation, DOD activities more benign to residential communities would be sited at Oceana.

The initial opposition of local officials and opinion-makers to a second outlying landing field, which the Navy now supports as a critical element of any solution involving continued operations at Oceana, is a perfect example of knee-jerk rejection of responsible proposals.

Is it more likely that Oceana will be closed because CCAJN has the temerity to suggest that **realignment** be considered, or because the city of Virginia Beach refuses to meaningfully accommodate the Navy's position that new residential construction in high noise zones are incompatible?

On the one hand, the local establishment claims that CCAJN is a hollow shell with few members and no influence. On the other, it fears that CCAJN can "move" the Pentagon. The truth is, the decision to close or retain Oceana is very unlikely to be made on the basis of CCAJN's input.

Our **realignment** rationale includes:

- * The OLF is in trouble in the federal courts in North Carolina, and is also being challenged by a large number of North Carolina's elected officials.
- * Super Hornets are up to 600 percent louder than the F-14 aircraft that will be replaced (as reported by The Pilot). The follow-on Joint Strike Fighter is reputed to be even louder.
- * Ongoing and likely future lawsuits against the Navy have the potential to be extremely costly to the government. (Note: CCAJN as an organization is not a litigant.)
- * It is utterly naïve to rely upon the city to "change its spots" with respect to residential encroachment if Oceana is excused from this BRAC round. How many Laskin Road condominium and South Beach apartment projects have to be approved over the Navy's objections to make this point? **Realignment** would allow the city to build right up to the fence lines of Oceana and Fentress, without restrictions or easements.

nRealigning Oceana with other DOD activities would allow the **base** to continue to be an economic engine. Detractors feign exaggerated angst while ignoring studies conducted for the city that conclude that even **base closure** (something not advocated by CCAJN) would only cause a moderate and short-term economic downturn.

CCAJN's position is clear: A BRAC-associated assessment of **realignment** is nothing more than a responsible management action concerning the future viability of an essential naval capability. CCAJN believes that any decision regarding Oceana should be based upon the informed judgment of experts assigned to the Pentagon and the BRAC, dealing specifically with the costs involved, **realignment** opportunities available and local issues that might erode long-term mission viability.

In theory, an exchange of functions at Oceana would obviate a very divisive community issue, bring peace and tranquillity to thousands of residents, improve the Navy's ability to train its pilots and allow the city to develop in an unrestricted manner, ensuring to the greatest extent the property rights of land owners.

Let's let the DOD and the BRAC do their jobs!

John C. Shick, Capt. U.S. Navy (ret.), is a board member of Citizens Concerned About Jet Noise.

DAILY BRIEFING May 2, 2005

Study: Northeast, Midwest hit hard by previous base closings

By George Cahlink

The Pentagon should avoid closing military bases and cutting personnel in Northeastern and Midwestern states because those regions already have borne the brunt of previous downsizing, a new report argues.

"With increased attention to the military's role in defending the homeland and responding to terrorist threats, it is clear that the Northeast-Midwest needs a strong military presence. [The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure process] must not erode the military presence now in the region," states an April 2005 report from the Northeast-Midwest Institute, a nonpartisan organization that studies issues affecting 18 states from Maine to Illinois.

[The report](#) comes as the Defense Department is putting the finishing touches on its list, due out no later than May 16, of which domestic military bases should be realigned or closed. Pentagon officials have said that as much as 25 percent of all space on military bases may be unneeded.

The nine-member nonpartisan Base Realignment and Closure Commission will begin debating closures this week and will spend the summer holding public hearings on the Pentagon's list before making final recommendations to the president on Sept. 8. If the president backs the recommendations, Congress will have 45 legislative days to accept or reject the list in its entirety.

According to the institute's report, in the BRAC rounds between 1988 and 1995, 35 of the 95 bases closed were in Northeast or Midwest States. Military personnel levels in the region fell by 41 percent, while Southern and Western states lost 21 percent of their personnel.

The Northeast and Midwest states that have lost the most military and Defense civilian personnel since 1987 are: Pennsylvania (61,420); New York (57,727); New Jersey (43,695); and Michigan (34,640). But those states lag far behind California, which has lost more than 200,000 personnel since 1987.

The 18 Northeast and Midwest states hold about 40 percent of the nation's population, but have less than 25 percent of all Defense Department personnel, the study found.

Springfield (IL) State Journal-Register
April 30, 2005

Pentagon: No Veto On Guard Bases

Illinois officials insist governor can keep 183rd in Springfield

By Otto Kreisher, Copley News Service

WASHINGTON - The Pentagon has told the nation's governors that, contrary to the views of Illinois' chief executive, they do not have a veto over what the Base Realignment and Closure process does with National Guard units in their states.

But Illinois officials insisted Friday that the law is on their side.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich and members of the state's congressional delegation - including House Speaker Dennis Hastert, a Republican - sent a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in March arguing that federal law prohibits the military from closing or moving a Guard unit without the governor's permission.

In a tactfully worded response and in a spokesman's statements, the Pentagon said they are wrong.

The resolution of the legal dispute, which could move into the federal courts as the base closure process proceeds, could have significant impact this year because of heavy use of the Guard and reserves in the war on terrorism.

Because of their need to use the part-time warriors in Afghanistan and Iraq, the services are looking at more closely aligning the reserve and active forces, which could mean housing the units closer together.

That is particularly true for the Air Force, which is planning to make significant cuts in its force, particularly its F-16 fighters and C-130 transports, and wants to merge more of its active and reserve units. Many of those airplanes are in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve.

Those signals in advance of the upcoming base closure round have made Illinois officials anxious about the fate of the 183rd Fighter Wing at Springfield's Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport and the 182nd Airlift Wing at the Greater Peoria Regional Airport. The 183rd flies F-16s and the 182nd flies C-130s.

In an attempt to shield those units, Illinois officials cited a section of federal law that says Guard units may not be "relocated or withdrawn under this chapter without the consent of the governor of the state."

But a letter that a Pentagon spokesman said had been sent to Blagojevich and members of Congress said that for BRAC to "achieve our objectives" the process "must involve all of our installations, including those used by the reserve component. Please be assured that the Department's BRAC recommendations will comply with all applicable legal requirements."

A Pentagon spokesman and a BRAC expert for the Congressional Research Service both said Friday that the law cited by Illinois officials does not apply to BRAC and does not prohibit the Pentagon from relocating National Guard units.

Although the letter, which was signed by Michael Wynne, the undersecretary for acquisition, technology and logistics, was dated April 12, the signers of the Illinois letter said Friday they had not seen the response.

"The bottom line for me is, I have not received a letter. I don't believe the letter was sent," said Rep. Ray LaHood, R-Peoria. "I sent them a letter citing a provision of the law. ... I'm expecting a response from the secretary of defense."

Angela Benander, spokeswoman for Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said his office had not receive Wynne's letter and stood by the delegation's legal opinion, which she said was approved by the state attorney general.

Benander also cited several cases in previous closure rounds in which Air National Guard bases were closed, only to be restored in the subsequent BRAC, which she said was a result of the legal barrier.

But the records of the four previous BRACs shows at least five Air Guard facilities that were closed and the units moved elsewhere.

In none of the cases in which Guard closures were reversed did the commission report cite any legal restraint, and the 1993 commission specifically recommended moving reserve units onto active bases.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA)
May 2, 2005

**'Save Our Base' lobbying cranks up
Defense tactics: Areas use emotion, consultants in bids to save facilities from Pentagon closure.**

By Bob Dart

Washington -- Former Mississippi congressman Sonny Montgomery is remembered as the ringmaster of the lobbying circus connected with military **base closures**.

When members of the **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission -- known as BRAC, for short -- would visit a Mississippi community with a threatened military installation, the Democratic representative would organize parades and "stick the commissioners on the back of convertibles," recalled Jeremiah Gertler, an analyst with the 1995 commission. "There would be cheerleaders with pompoms and marching bands, and people would be lining the streets cheering the procession to the **base**."

"He may have been on to something. His **bases** did very well," mused Gertler, now a defense specialist with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Montgomery is retired now. But with the Pentagon's proposed list for the first round of **base closures** in a decade set to be announced in mid-May, "Save Our **Base**" lobbying is revved up from Kittery, Maine, where the historic Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is endangered, to Yuba City, Calif., where 500 townsfolk recently lined up on a high school football field and spelled out "Save Beale" in a campaign to keep open nearby Beale Air Force **Base**.

Four earlier rounds of **closures** in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 shut down 97 major military installations and ended or reduced operations in scores of smaller ones. The bipartisan BRAC committee, using -- but not limited to -- the Pentagon list, will make its decisions by Sept. 8. Congress and President Bush will then ratify or reject the recommendations.

Before rendering its decisions, the commission conducts hearings and sends members and staff to every **base** slated for closure.

Major reductions

Seeking significant consolidations, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has warned that a fifth of the remaining 425 domestic **bases** could be closed. States and communities have engaged an army of lobbyists, consultants, former lawmakers and retired military honchos to try to keep their **bases** off the dreaded list.

Gov. Sonny Perdue has gone to the Pentagon to make the case for the state's **bases**. And Georgia's voluntary Military Affairs Coordinating Committee is headed by the state's former senators: Sam Nunn, who was a Democratic chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Mack Mattingly, a former Republican chairman of the Military Construction Appropriations Subcommittee. It also includes five retired generals or admirals.

"For any military community waiting to this stage to hire a lobbyist, it's too late," said Bob Hurt, Nunn's former top Senate aide and a partner in Hurt, Norton and Associates, a consulting firm to several military communities in the South and Midwest.

Unless a community has already prepared its defense, it makes it harder to challenge the Pentagon's list when the BRAC commissioners begin regional hearings on the Pentagon recommendations, he said.

The campaigns pit community against community, state against state.

"It's very competitive," said Barry Rhoads, a member of the 1991 **base** closing commission and founder of The Rhoads Group, another lobbying group in the BRAC process. Indeed, he would not reveal his clients or tactics because "I don't want to let others know what we are doing."

Preparing for the 2005 closings, "the efforts go back a couple of years," said Tara Butler, the BRAC specialist with the National Governors Association. "But there is no such thing as BRAC-proofing a **base**. No one knows what will work or what will not."

The basic approach is to anticipate any problems and remove them before the assessments are made, she said. A problem at many **bases** is encroachment. "Residential or commercial development bumps up against military establishment."

Arizona, Georgia, Florida and North Carolina are among the states that have passed legislation to help **bases** ward off encroachment, she said.

Selling points

Many communities have upgraded infrastructure around **bases** -- widening and paving roads, upgrading sewer lines and building more affordable housing, Butler said. Others use zoning to facilitate night training.

States also go to great lengths to emphasize why their **bases** should remain open while others close.

"It is crucial that we make the case for those unique defense assets that California brings to the table," Leon Panetta, a former California congressman and Clinton's chief of staff, told the commission he heads to keep **bases** in his home state. "California's weather and terrain provide the best place imaginable for training, testing and mobilizing forces. Not even the Defense Department can move the mountains, desert, oceans, and sunshine that result in California providing 90 percent of all military training days nationwide."

Communities also go all out to convince decision-makers that they appreciate military families -- and their dollars.

The emotional tactics range from hundreds of residents sending e-mails and letters to campaigns in which elementary school children draw pictures after visits to their local **bases** and send them to the BRAC, said Tim Ford, a spokesman for An Association of Defense Communities, an advocacy group.

"Last time, one community had a 'living flag' made up of 300 elementary school kids in red, white or blue hats," Ford said. "Several members of the BRAC commission were flown in helicopters over the hillside where the kids were."

"Commissioners are human," said Hurt. "When they go to an installation and see people have turned out, it helps."

No community wants to be remembered as the place where people didn't come out to support their **base**.

"Community support is one of those intangible factors," said Ken Beeks, vice president of Business Executives for National Security, a group that views **base closures** as a necessary to cut Pentagon spending. "Everybody knows what is a good Navy town, a good Army town, and what is not."

However, Beeks believes that hiring lobbyists in the BRAC process is a waste of money.

"It's probably not a winnable battle [for communities earmarked for **closures**], but most feel that they have to be seen as having tried," he said.

Day, The (New London, CT)
May 2, 2005

Human service groups would take a big hit if sub base closes - Navy community is source of volunteers and engine for economy

By Gladys Alcedo

Groton - The closing of the Naval Submarine **Base** would resonate throughout nonprofit human-service agencies in the region, negatively affecting the people they serve, from children to the elderly.

Such agencies, which have depended on the generosity of sub **base** personnel for years, would expect to see a sharp decline in the number of volunteers and in the donations that help them deliver their services. And the effect of the **base's** closing -- and attendant downsizing at Electric Boat and perhaps other sub **base** contractors and suppliers - would be compounded by a greater need for the very services nonprofits provide.

"There is a serious concern (that the **base** could close)," Janet D. Pearce, executive director of the United Way of Southeastern Connecticut, said. "Every agency is talking about it. Everyone realizes it's not a scare tactic. It's not pretend. It will affect everyone, not just the nonprofits."

Last year, the United Way collected \$1.3 million in donations from Electric Boat, Pearce said.

Word from the Pentagon on the 2005 **Base Realignment and Closure** process, or BRAC, is expected as early as next week.

"You can't lose 11,000 or 13,000 people and not have an impact," Joseph Petroff, executive director of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Southeastern Connecticut, said. "It would just be devastating."

The impact of the **base's** closing also would take a toll on the volunteer fire departments in the region that have come to depend on the resources of the Submarine **Base** Fire Department, according to Old Mystic Fire Chief Kenneth W. Richards Jr.

The **base**, which has 7,500 military personnel, employs 1,400 civilians as well as 1,000 contractors -- numbers that don't reflect the sailors' children, spouses and families living in nearby Navy housing.

The Navy culture encourages sailors and their families to serve their community, Nora Patterson, wife of a recently retired Naval chief, said. Fifteen years ago, she co-founded the Groton townwide Parent-Teacher Organization.

Crystal Meador, 17, a senior at Robert E. Fitch Senior High School in Groton and the daughter of Chief Petty Officer Jim Meador, volunteers an afternoon each week at Fitch Middle School, helping tutor students with their homework. Her sister, Courtney, a high school sophomore, is involved in the same Homework Club, organized and coordinated by Patterson.

"I want to help kids," Crystal Meador said. "I want to be a teacher when I grow up. I've just always had this feeling that I want to help people."

She said her desire to work with children and help the community came from both her parents. Her mother, Sherri, works at a military day care center.

Patterson said sons and daughters of military personnel are predisposed to volunteer because of their upbringing, having been told all their lives that they "have to give back to the community they live in."

Navy volunteers often work without much fanfare, toiling behind the scenes, sometimes in support of such high-profile events as the Fourth of July Parade and the Holiday Lights Parade in Groton, according to Jerry Lokken of the town Parks and Recreation Department.

Many sailors serve as coaches in youth sports programs and help maintain local parks, in one instance clearing land near a school to make room for recreational fields, Lokken said.

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If the **base** closed, the Charter Oak Chapter of the American Red Cross would lose the substantial amount of blood it regularly collects there -- about 900 pints a year in drives held once or twice a month, Bill Kimbell, an agency spokesman, said.

"It's a large group of people oriented to donating blood," he said.

The Volunteer Services Department of United Community and Family Services in Norwich would lose the volunteers it needs to help with its benefit Harvest Fair in September and its Care Connection program for the elderly.

Lori Rygielski, coordinator of the department, said it has gotten used to calling the **base** whenever it needs volunteers to help with the agency's projects, such as relocating its offices or checking on the elderly to remind them to take their medication.

It's estimated that about half of the nearly 300 volunteers involved in the 2003 Special Olympics in Waterford came from the **base**, said Marc Mercadante, regional director of the Eastern Region of Special Olympics Connecticut.

Mercadante said efforts to stage the Special Olympics in the region in the future would be made more difficult without the **base** and its volunteers.

"That was a group you could always count on and they were always there," he said. "The sailors, their families and non-commissioned personnel volunteer as coaches, medical personnel on stand-by and provide other support associated with the games."

Mentoring and PTO programs also would lose a major source of volunteers, if the sub **base** closed.

"We will miss them, if they can't stay, because every mentor counts with our children," said Christie Hayes, a special education teacher at Eastern Point Elementary School and co-chairwoman of the school district's

Mentoring Committee. The mentoring program has a long list of students waiting for mentors willing to commit an hour a week.

Kevin Trejo, a member of the townwide PTO, estimated that 30 percent of the PTO members at the Charles Barnum Elementary School in Groton are military spouses.

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Pearce, the United Way executive director, said nonprofits worry about the potential ripple effects of the **base's** closing. The resulting increase in unemployment could reduce spending in the local economy and cause families to struggle financially, she said. Nonprofits and social-service agencies would face a growing demand for their services and a need for new programs, such as job training.

"The need for social services increases," Pearce said. "We wouldn't have enough money to subsidize child care to help people find jobs, the demand on the food center ... would increase."

Donations to charities would drop, too, she said.

"The first thing people think about is, 'Can I keep my house? Can I keep the house warm this winter?' Not 'How much can I increase my donation to United Way?'"

Day, The (New London, CT)
May 1, 2005

Military Vets Find Value Of Sub Base Hard To Measure

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a series of stories looking at the impact on the southeastern Connecticut community if the Naval Submarine **Base** in Groton closes.

By ROBERT A. HAMILTON

Groton - Each week when he visits the commissary at the Naval Submarine **Base**, John B. "Jack" Kurrus scans the board at the front of the store that highlights some of the biggest savings of the day.

Last week, 39-cent cans of Green Giant vegetables greeted him as he walked in the door. He picked up a dozen extra large brown eggs for 97 cents and a half gallon of 1 percent milk for \$1.05.

"We'd miss our 30 percent savings at the commissary if they closed the **base**, you can bet on that," said Kurrus, 73, who enlisted in the Navy in 1951 as an engineman, later earned a commission and retired in 1972 as a lieutenant commander on the USS Fulton in New London. He still lives in New London.

Other retirees say it would be hard to give up the free pharmaceuticals they get from the Naval Ambulatory Care Center (NACC), the deep discounts on clothing, hardware and appliances at the Navy exchange, and other benefits that come from a career in the military.

So they are all holding their breath to see what happens in the 2005 **Base Realignment** and Closure process, known as BRAC.

The Pentagon must publish its list of recommended **base closures** in the Federal Register no later than Monday, May 16, which means it must be ready at least one work day ahead of that deadline, or Friday, May 13. Rather than invite the inevitable "Black Friday" associations, the Pentagon is said to be considering an earlier release, possibly on May 10 or 11.

Southeastern Connecticut is home to an estimated 12,000 military retirees, including Army - one of the shoppers at the commissary last week was wearing a 25th Infantry Division hat - Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. Many use services at the **base** to a varying degree.

"I have a prescription I can't get at the Coast Guard Academy, but I can at the NACC," said retired Coast Guard Capt. Wayne R. Gronlund of East Lyme, 57. "And if I'm looking for anything in the way of electronics, a new DVD player or TV, I usually head for the Exchange."

Many of them bristle at the talk of **base closure**, because it would mean the Navy is reneging on an unwritten agreement to provide these perks to people who devoted 20 years or more to service of their country.

"We're looking at it from a political standpoint - we were promised a commissary, we were promised an exchange, we were promised a medical clinic, and now they could cut it all off," said Alfred A. Charette of Mystic, a sonarman on Nautilus, the Navy's first submarine, who later retired as a commander in charge of tactical systems at Submarine Development Squadron 12 in Groton.

"There's a significant number of people in this area who rely on the **base** who aren't on active duty," said Charette, who is 72. "The loss of the **base** would be disastrous for the retiree community."

Perhaps even more important, some veterans contend, is that the **base** is a link to what was for many people the most important part of their life, and allows them to continue to be a part of a military community.

John Donlon, a 77-year-old Mystic resident, qualified in submarines 53 years ago and retired as a Navy captain 26 years ago this July. He attended the Submarine Officers Birthday Ball last month.

If the **base** shuts down, the retirees will lose that link. The closest Navy **base** would be in Newport, R.I., providing Newport is not shut down as well. The Department of Defense has made it clear that every installation is getting a serious look this year.

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Retirees get a Department of Defense identification card that gives them the same access to the **base** as someone on active duty, but some of the advantages of living close to the **base** have diminished over the years, they said.

At one point, retirees could use the formal officers' and chiefs' clubs for social gatherings, but they have closed because of financial problems. The hospital has been reduced to an ambulatory care center, and the automotive center and the garden center at the Exchange have been dropped.

"On a Friday afternoon, I would have seen tons of my shipmates, and we would have been swapping stories with a bunch of active-duty guys," said retired Master Chief Petty Officer John Mumford, 67. "That's an important thing that the Navy lost when it shut those clubs down."

Mumford noted that there are some intangibles that would be lost if the entire **base** shut down. The Sea Cadets program, which he helped to supervise for about 10 years, is on the **base** and provides young people with information about the sea service.

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Sea Cadets moved off the **base** temporarily and membership dropped off, Mumford said. Membership picked up again after the **base** provided the group with a building for its meeting.

"We send two or three kids a year into one of the branches of the armed forces, not always just the Navy, either," Mumford said. "From a community standpoint it would be a big loss. It's a wonderful youth development program."

There are many other services that are still available to retirees, such as the ticket center, which provides discounted trips to Broadway shows and baseball games in Boston, and a nine-hole golf course that might not be St. Andrews but can be played on a budget - \$9 for nine holes for people willing to walk.

There's also a gas station, though retired Capt. Michael Reigel of Preston said most retirees use it out of convenience, filling up when they're on **base** for some other purpose, rather than to get a bargain.

"I do buy my gasoline at the **base**, but if you drive up and down Route 12 and look for the cheapest station, then the **base** will be right in that ballpark," Reigel said. "It may be a penny less, or it may be the same, but there's usually not that much difference."

The fitness center, swimming pool, racquetball court, bowling alley and Reunions pub and delicatessen are also open to retirees, along with an outfitting center for outdoor enthusiasts.

"Once in a while we go down and rent some sleeping bags when the grandchildren are in town," Kurrus said. "They're all cleaned up and ready to go, virtually brand new. And you can rent canoes, trailers, camp stoves, a bunch of camping and outdoor equipment."

The **base** still maintains a marina where dozens of privately owned boats from dinghies to small yachts are stored, in the water or on shore. Donlon said his son Thomas, a sergeant major of 22 years standing in the National Guard, has a 33-foot sloop on the blocks on the lower **base**, where he pays \$900 a year for storage.

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Probably the most heavily used services are those at the pharmacy, which has an automated system so that people can pick up prescriptions without getting out of their cars, and the commissary, which sells groceries, and the exchange, a sort of military department store.

The Defense Commissary Agency estimates that a family of four shopping at one of its 280 outlets saves an estimated \$2,700 a year.

The Exchange system did a survey last October of 350 products ranging from audio gear to toys and greeting cards and estimated its customers save an average of 21.2 percent from buying retail, not including any savings from the tax-free status.

If certain drugs are on the Navy "formulary," or list of prescriptions available at the NACC, buyers save the co-payment normally made under the military health insurance plan or any private plan.

But even those services have lost some of their luster with the opening of big box stores like Home Depot, Super Wal-Mart and BJ's Wholesale Club, retirees contend.

"I get some prescriptions up at the hospital, and on occasion I go to the Exchange. But I live out in Lisbon, three miles from a Super Wal-Mart, and, given the price of gas, running down to the **base** to get something doesn't make a lot of sense," said James L. Christley, a retired master chief electrician's mate.

"For me, the savings on prescriptions probably translate to about \$300 or \$400 a year," Christley said. "It's not a killer by any means, and it's not something that would make it worthwhile to go to the next nearest Navy **base**, but it is nice."

But other retirees said they still prefer shopping in the military community. The commissary, in particular, has its fans.

"I tried a Sam's Club once, but you have to buy regimental combat team-sized boxes, the kind of thing that takes up most of your station wagon, to save any money," Donlon said. "It just didn't work out to be worth it for my wife and me."

Corpus Christi Caller-Times (TX)
April 30, 2005

Base closure decision inches closer to deadline

By Tara Copp

WASHINGTON - In the next two weeks, military communities across the country will learn whether the Pentagon wants to close their hometown **bases**, modify missions or leave them just the way they are.

Here are five things military communities should know going into this week and next, based on background briefings given Friday at the National Press Club by congressional and defense staff members and military communities that lost **bases** in the four previous rounds.

When? The date for list release was May 16, but federal publication rules would require the list to actually be published May 13, a Friday.

The Pentagon does not want to release the list on Friday the 13th, a defense official acknowledged Friday. Reporters were advised to be ready on May 12 with a warning that the final decision on the date hasn't been made.

Will local leaders get advance warning? Local **base** commanders might get a short advance warning, perhaps as little as an hour, or none at all. In previous rounds the Pentagon made a "Hill drop" to representatives and senators a day before the formal announcements.

If a **base** is listed, how long before it will actually close? If the **base** is listed for **closure** in the final Sept. 8 recommendation, it then has up to two years to start shutting down; complete **closure** must take place within six years.

If a **base** is on the list, is there any way to get off the list? It's expected to be more difficult to get off the list this round because of procedural changes. Officials said Friday that historically about 91 percent of the **bases** recommended for **closure** have closed.

If a **base** isn't on the list, is it safe to say it won't close? Most likely. Changes to procedure for this round make it very difficult for a **base** to be added by commissioners after the Pentagon releases its recommendations.



DAILY BRIEFING May 3, 2005

Base closure panel begins four-month deliberations

By Megan Scully

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission Chairman Anthony Principi on Tuesday swore in eight commissioners, officially kicking off four frenzied months of analysis and coast-to-coast travel that might result in major changes at more than 100 domestic military installations.

During the first of three sessions planned for Tuesday and Wednesday, commissioners received a quick tutorial from GAO and Congressional Research Service analysts on the base-closing process, as well as lessons learned from four previous rounds in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995.

The most important lesson taken from previous commissions is to adhere to base-closure selection criteria and procedures, said Barry Holman, GAO director of defense capabilities and management. By following procedures, the commission will "ensure the integrity of the process and ensure the confidence of the American public," Holman added, cautioning that the commission's work could be hampered by even a "slight deviation" from the process.

The 2005 BRAC round promises to differ significantly from the previous rounds. Commissioners, for instance, will place a greater emphasis on a base's military value -- essentially how they fit into the Pentagon's operations and vast transformation plans -- as they analyze Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's list of base-closing recommendations. The commission also will weigh more heavily a base's joint capabilities and ability to perform cross-service missions.

Commission members expressed concern Tuesday about the cost savings associated with BRAC and the effectiveness of previous rounds. Philip Coyle, a Pentagon appointee in the Clinton administration, asked why the military still has as much as 25 percent excess capacity after the closure of hundreds of facilities during the 1990s. Holman replied that the military still felt it had too much infrastructure after the 1995 round, adding that the commission should wait until the list comes out to get a "better handle on excess capacity."

Other commissioners asked about a potential loophole -- raised by lawmakers -- that might prevent the military from closing National Guard bases without the consent of the governor of the affected state. "We ought to get that resolved as quickly as possible," said former Transportation Secretary Skinner.

After the hearing, Principi would not comment on the possible National Guard loophole, stating that it is an "issue for lawyers to decide on."

Rumsfeld is expected to release his list next week, Principi said. The commission then has four months to analyze the department's findings before submitting its list of recommendations to the White House by Sept. 8.

DAILY BRIEFING May 3, 2005

Pentagon's base closure list will be hard to challenge

By George Cahlink

Military bases that are spared when the Pentagon submits its base realignment and closure hit list later this month will be able to breathe easier than bases in previous rounds, because it will be harder this time for the independent BRAC Commission to add bases to the Defense Department's list.

Several BRAC lobbyists and experts, speaking on condition they not be named, said legal changes give the Pentagon more power than before in crafting lists.

The nine-member BRAC commission will review the Pentagon's work at a series of public hearings over the next several months, the first of which took place Tuesday. The panel has until Sept. 8 to make final recommendations to the president. If the president approves the list, it will be forwarded to Congress, which then has 45 legislative days to accept or reject it.

In previous BRAC rounds in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995, the commission accepted about 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations for closure or realignment. But sometimes the panel made unexpected changes. The most famous came in 1995, when the BRAC panel surprised the Air Force and hundreds of civilian defense workers in San Antonio and Sacramento by recommending that two of the service's five depots be closed.

This time, it will be harder for the commission to make such changes, due to a series of provisions in the law authorizing the current BRAC round. They include the following requirements:

- That seven out of the nine commissioners vote to add a base to the list or expand a proposed realignment. In the past, only five had to support any additions.
- That two BRAC commissioners visit any base that the panel is even considering closing or realigning. In the past, only a single commissioner needed to visit a base -- and only after the panel had agreed to add it to the list.
- That the BRAC panel give the Defense secretary 15 days to testify or provide a written response about any additions being considered. In the past, no such requirement existed.

The rules governing removing a base from the list remain relatively unchanged from the past four rounds. To strike a base from the list, the commission must demonstrate that the Pentagon deviated substantially from future force structure projections and the criteria used to decide what bases are closed or realigned. There's no set rule for how many votes are needed to remove a base from the list, but in the past, a majority vote has been required to overturn a Pentagon decision.

DAILY BRIEFING May 3, 2005

Lawmakers may seek to stall base closure process

By Megan Scully

As the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission gets down to work Tuesday, opponents of the new round of base closings are expected to use the fiscal 2006 defense authorization bill to attempt to stall or upset the process, according to congressional sources.

Potential tactics to thwart the commission include repealing the section of law that authorizes the 2005 base-closing round. Lawmakers also could use the authorization bill to change or delay any base-closing steps along the way, although President Bush has threatened to veto past authorization bills to try to prevent that approach.

"It may be difficult at this point to amend the BRAC process," said a spokeswoman for House Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee Chairman Joel Hefley, R-Colo. In addition to a possible veto, she said, "Historically, the Senate has been supportive of BRAC."

Still, "since BRAC is a creation of Congress, Congress can change the rules under which BRAC is carried out," said Daniel Else, a national defense specialist at the Congressional Research Service. "During previous sessions, some members of Congress have contemplated proposing significant changes to the BRAC process, such as delaying its effects for up to two years, but so sweeping a change has not yet been enacted."

Whether BRAC opponents will succeed this time around and specifically what tactics they will employ remain to be seen. But the fight over base closings appears to be far from over.

"I think it's going to be very, very interesting," said House Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee ranking member Solomon Ortiz, D-Texas. The longtime opponent of this base-closing round said he has not decided whether he will try to stop the process, but he assumes there will be arguments in both the House and the Senate to do just that.

The nine-member commission officially starts work Tuesday, at a hearing on Capitol Hill. Until now, the process has been in the hands of senior Pentagon officials, who will keep their findings under wraps until they deliver them to Congress next week.

The commission will analyze the Pentagon list before submitting its own recommendations to the White House on Sept. 8. Historically, base-closing commissions have endorsed most of the Pentagon's decisions, which are expected to save the department \$7 billion annually.

Originally, the House Armed Services Committee, which might stand to be the biggest barrier to the BRAC process, was scheduled to mark up its version of the 2005 defense authorization bill in early May. But a schedule change bumped full-committee hearings to May 18, giving lawmakers representing districts that are home to the bases on the Pentagon list more time to plot their strategies before budget discussions begin.

"The have-nots will be in a must-defend situation on pain of death because they can't afford to have their bases closed," said a congressional aide. "They will do everything they can to keep [bases] open through any vehicle going through."

But analysts were quick to point out that stalling attempts so far have been largely unsuccessful. Most recently, Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., tried to slow the process by placing a hold on the nomination of commission Chairman Anthony Principi. Bush ultimately bypassed the Senate, making recess appointments for Principi and the eight other commissioners.

"Would I be surprised if they [tried to stall the base-closing process]? I think I would not," said Ken Beeks, a vice president at Business Executives for National Security, a group that supports base closings. "Do I think it will work? No. But I wouldn't put it past them."

The most effective way to get a base off the Pentagon's list still might be the tried-and-true method of providing commissioners with in-depth analysis of how individual installations fit into the military's future plans, said Paul Hirsch, a member of the 1991 commission and a BRAC lobbyist for Madison Government Affairs.

"The process is insulated from individual members of Congress trying to make efforts to save their base," Hirsch said. "At this point, once that list comes out, that list is out."

New York Times
May 4, 2005

Military Base Closings Will Sting, Panel Chairman Says

By Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON, May 3 - The chairman of the independent commission that will review the Pentagon's list of recommended military base closings warned Tuesday that the impending decisions would be "tsunamis in the communities they hit."

The chairman, Anthony J. Principi, a former secretary of veterans affairs, also promised to provide a "clear-eyed reality check" of the Defense Department's decisions to close or consolidate military bases around the country.

Mr. Principi spoke at the first meeting of the commission, in a hearing room on Capitol Hill where the Government Accountability Office also issued a report stating that communities that lost bases in previous years were "continuing to recover" and had regained about 85 percent of the civilian jobs that were lost.

The report said that most communities affected by four earlier rounds of base closings, beginning in 1988, were faring well when compared with the average American unemployment and income-growth rates, but it added, "The recovery process has not necessarily been easy."

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is to deliver his recommendations to the commission next week, probably Friday, in the first round of base closings in a decade and one that Mr. Rumsfeld seeks to make a cornerstone of his plan to remake the military into a leaner, more agile force.

While the Pentagon has said it has nearly 25 percent more capacity than what the armed services need and that all 425 domestic bases are under scrutiny, Mr. Rumsfeld said recently that the 70,000 troops returning home from Europe over the next several years would soften the blow for scores of communities nationwide.

At Tuesday's initial meeting of the commission, all nine members were sworn in, and Mr. Principi announced that the panel would hold several hearings on Capitol Hill and across the country to analyze the Pentagon's rationale and hear reaction from state and community groups, as well as military specialists.

Panel members and their staff said they had little inkling of what Mr. Rumsfeld would recommend. The Pentagon has sought to clamp down on information leaks by requiring hundreds of employees involved in the process over the last two years to sign secrecy oaths.

A top Pentagon official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the oaths, said that there were working lists of proposed base closings and realignments circulating at senior levels but that Mr. Rumsfeld had not yet been briefed on a final set of recommendations.

The military value of a base, particularly its impact on fighting wars, training and combat readiness, as well as the potential cost savings, are among the major criteria that Pentagon analysts have used in their calculations. The panel members and their 90 staff members will use that criteria in their review.

"Every dollar consumed in redundant, unnecessary, obsolete, inappropriately designed or located infrastructure is a dollar not available to provide the training that might save a marine's life or purchase the munitions to win a soldier's firefight," Mr. Principi said.

He told fellow commission members, Congressional aides, lobbyists and reporters packed into the hearing room, "The ripples of the proposals the secretary of defense will soon present to our nation, and to us, will be tsunamis in the communities they hit."

State and local officials from California to Florida are bracing for the worst, and going to extraordinary lengths to insulate hometown bases from cuts or consolidation.

Some bases in Texas, however, like Fort Hood and Fort Bliss, may actually grow by absorbing troops returning from Europe.

In Illinois, officials fear that Scott Air Force Base, near St. Louis, and the Rock Island Arsenal could be on the chopping block. These officials have also expressed concern that two Air National Guard bases, one in Springfield and another in Peoria, are considered vulnerable as the Air Force looks to merge many of its active-duty and reservist units.

In late March, House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert and two other senior Illinois lawmakers wrote Mr. Rumsfeld to warn him that closing any National Guard base would, by law, require the state governor's approval.

The Pentagon's top acquisition official, Michael W. Wynne, wrote back to the lawmakers last month to inform them politely that they were wrong.

In Massachusetts last month, Gov. Mitt Romney asked the Department of Homeland Security to build a new antiterrorism training center at Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod, in an effort to protect the installation from closing.

On Tuesday, the commission members, who are largely retired military officers selected by President Bush and Congressional leaders, were given a tutorial by Congressional analysts on the history and procedures of the base-closing process. They also received an update on national security threats.

A final roster of cuts and other changes, prepared by the commission, is due Sept. 8. Mr. Bush and Congress must then accept or reject the list by Nov. 7.

In four previous base-closing rounds, 85 percent of the Pentagon's findings were endorsed.

San Antonio Express-News
May 4, 2005

BRAC May Set Sights On Guard

By Gary Martin, Express-News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Base Realignment and Closure commission began its work Tuesday by asking for a legal ruling on National Guard facilities that may be included when the Pentagon releases its recommendations next week.

After being sworn in, the nine-member BRAC panel sought to clarify legal parameters of the 2005 process that begins when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld discloses his "hit list."

"The ripples of the proposals the secretary of defense will present to our nation and to us will be tsunamis in the communities they hit," said Anthony Principi, chairman of the president's appointed panel that will review the Pentagon list.

The panel sought the legal ruling after Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich asked his attorney general to determine whether the federal government can close or realign National Guard facilities in his state.

The ruling could have an impact in Texas, where the 149th Fighter Wing at Lackland AFB in San Antonio and the 147th Fighter Wing at Ellington Field in Houston are considered candidates for consolidation.

"They are going to look at states like ours with two fighter wings," said retired Brig. Gen. John Jernigan, executive director of the San Antonio Military Missions Task Force.

Jernigan said the Texas Air National Guard fighter wing at Lackland is a mission of several hundred people. The wing trains F-16 pilots.

Pentagon officials are eyeing a consolidation that possibly could close one of the wings and combine it at the other location to provide cost efficiency.

Illinois lawmakers, led by House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., questioned whether Rumsfeld has the authority to close National Guard bases or shut down facilities that serve states as well as the federal government.

A fighter wing and an airlift wing in Illinois are tenants at regional public airports in Peoria and Springfield.

The Pentagon maintains it can close Guard facilities without a governor's consent.

And a law cited by Illinois congressmen isn't applicable to the base closure process, Dan Else with the Congressional Research Service told the panel.

Still, Else told commissioners there needs to be legal opinion on the issue.

"It would seem to me that we ought to get that resolved as quickly as possible," said commissioner Sam Skinner, a former transportation secretary under former President George Bush.

Else told the panel that military personnel decreased from 3 million in 1986 to 2 million in 2003, while the amount of military property in the United States increased from 26.4 million acres in 1986 to 29 million acres in 2003.

Rumsfeld has said the Pentagon needs to shed unwanted facilities to cut costs and spend those savings on weapons and other needs of a changing military.

The Pentagon is trying to transform the military from a Cold War force focused on a Soviet threat to a more flexible force to meet new emerging threats with strike groups.

Four previous closure rounds, in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995, closed or realigned 451 bases, including 97 major facilities such as San Antonio's Kelly AFB, for a cost savings of \$29 billion, according to a General Accountability Office report released Tuesday.

The GAO report said those actions would continue to provide a recurring savings of about \$7 billion a year over the next decade.

Barry Holman with the GAO told the panel the communities that suffered in past base closure rounds have rebounded economically.

"While BRAC can have a traumatic impact, short-term impact on communities," Holman said, "most nearby communities that we've looked at have recovered or continue to recover from prior BRAC rounds."

Texas has 17 major active-duty military installations, with a combined economic impact of \$49 billion annually. Four of those installations are in San Antonio, with an impact each year of \$5 billion in military spending.

The city of Houston took over 1,800 acres of Ellington Field when it ceased operating as an active-duty base in the 1970s. The Texas Air National Guard operates its fighter wing on 204 acres still owned by the federal government.

By law, Rumsfeld must submit his closure recommendations to the commission by May 16, but Pentagon officials said the list likely will be released by the end of next week.

Principi said the BRAC panel — which includes three members with Texas ties — would work "devoid of politics" in a fair and equitable manner.

The panel must submit a final list to President Bush by Sept. 8.

Since the last BRAC round, Congress changed the law to require a vote of seven of nine commissioners to add a facility to the list; the defense secretary has 15 days to respond.

Holman warned the panel against deviating from the process, and pointed to President Clinton's decision in 1995 to privatize in-place Air Force missions at the now-defunct Kelly and at McClellan AFB in Sacramento, Calif.

"Adhering to the process is very critical," Holman said.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA)
May 4, 2005

Fairness promised in base closings
Panel that will draft list begins its work

By Bob Dart

Washington -- Coming decisions to shut down selected U.S. military **bases** "will be tsunamis in the communities they hit," the chairman of the commission that will determine the **closures** warned Tuesday.

At the opening meeting of the nine-member **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission -- BRAC for short -- Chairman Anthony Principi promised that the panel would be "open, independent, fair and equitable" in deciding later this year which **bases** should be closed or downsized.

The Defense Department must submit its list of recommendations to the commission by May 16. It is expected to release the much-anticipated list next week.

States including Georgia, which escaped previous **base-closure** rounds but could be vulnerable this year, are preparing aggressive lobbying efforts to protect their **bases**. But officials appearing before the commission said the decision on whether to close a **base** will be based on its "military value" and not economic impact on the surrounding community.

By closing certain **bases**, the Pentagon hopes to save billions of dollars and divert resources from the traditional Cold War model of the military to fight the war on terror. But the commission's actions will have ramifications far beyond national defense, bringing upheaval to thousands of families whose lives and livelihoods revolve around the nation's 425 domestic **bases**.

Closures from 1988 to 1995 eliminated or realigned 451 facilities large and small and saved about \$29 billion through 2003, according to the Government Accountability Office, an investigative arm of Congress.

The multi-step BRAC process is designed to shield the sensitive selection from politics. The commission will consider the Pentagon recommendations and, after months of hearings and visits to **bases**, come up with its own list by Sept. 8. Principi, a former secretary of veterans affairs, heads the bipartisan commission with members -- many of them retired military officers -- appointed by President Bush and Republican and Democratic congressional leaders.

Congress and Bush can either accept or reject the commission's list of **base closures** and realignments, but cannot alter it.

Principi cautioned that the commissioners face "challenges to our emotions as we face our fellow citizens knowing our decisions will profoundly affect their lives and the future of their communities."

The commission must "set aside concerns of partisanship and parochialism to debate, decide and record our findings only on our assessment of the Defense Department's recommendations against the criteria established by Congress," he said.

The GAO report said communities that lost **bases** in previous years did not face easy transitions, but have in general regained about 85 percent of the civilian jobs that were lost.

In determining which **bases** to close in the 1980s and '90s, commissioners considered three criteria related to community impact along with four related to military value and one related to return on investment, said Barry Holman, the GAO's director of defense capabilities and management. A 2002 change in the law required the Pentagon to give priority to the military value of **bases** in choosing which to close or scale down, he said.

In previous rounds of **base** closings, the BRAC commission without change accepted about 85 percent of the Pentagon's recommendations, said Dan Else, an analyst with the Congressional Research Service. That percentage could be even higher this time because of the emphasis on military values and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's stated intention to use **base** closings as a step in revamping the armed forces, he said.

Before deciding what **bases** to close, the commission must determine what force is needed to meet future threats.

"Since it's difficult to know when you've arrived if you don't know where you're going, this commission must have an understanding of the anticipated future threats to our nation," Principi said.

Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ)
May 3, 2005

SAXTON 'CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC' FOR REGION'S BASES / BASE CLOSURE PROPOSALS DUE THIS MONTH

By Bernard Vaughan

A spokesman for U.S. Rep. Jim Saxton, R-3rd, said Monday that the congressman was "cautiously optimistic" as he prepares for the results of the fifth and largest Department of Defense **Base Realignment and Closure**, or BRAC, process.

Saxton's district includes Fort Dix and McGuire Air Force **Base**. It also included Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station until redistricting in the 1990s.

"The congressman feels he's done everything possible in the last 12 years," Saxton spokesman Jeff Sagnip Hollendonner said.

The commission will be sworn in today, but the Department of Defense has probably nearly finished its BRAC list, Saxton said in a statement Monday. Saxton holds the fourth-highest-ranking position on the House Armed Services Committee.

Although the nine-person commission's results must be presented to Congress no later than May 16, the results could be made public May 13, Saxton said in the statement.

"They're being pretty closed-mouth about it," Hollendonner said when asked if Saxton has received any indication from BRAC commissioners what the results will be.

"They have sent some indication that they want to take a harder look at research and development facilities for the Army," Hollendonner added.

Each of the three **bases** has been slated for **closure** in the past and has survived, Hollendonner said.

Fort Monmouth, Picatinny Arsenal and Naval Weapons Station Earle are among the other New Jersey **bases** being evaluated, Hollendonner said.

There are more than 17,000 jobs among the three **bases**, plus more than 5,000 military spouses, Saxton's statement said. The annual effect on the local economy is estimated at \$2 billion, the statement said.

Of the **bases**, Hollendonner said "McGuire is probably the strongest. Fort Dix has a unique position too. Lakehurst's situation has improved dramatically."

But among the three, Hollendonner did say that Lakehurst faced the most challenges.

Day, The (New London, CT)
May 3, 2005

Navy Gives Portsmouth The Business - USS Hartford repair job pulled out from under EB

By Robert A. Hamilton

Groton - Facing strong political protest from the northern New England congressional delegations, the Navy has withdrawn \$130 million of submarine repair work from Electric Boat and given it to Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

EB had begun planning for the repair period on the USS Hartford, which was expected to employ as many as 500 yard workers over a 12-month period in 2005 and '06, and was negotiating the final terms of the deal with the Navy.

"We would like to have had the Hartford depot maintenance, however it didn't fit with the Navy's overall maintenance plan," said company spokesman Neil D. Ruenzel.

Privately, however, the decision left many at the shipyard, and congressional staffers from Connecticut, fuming at the Navy's change of mind.

"For the Navy to decide on one day that the work is going south, and the next day that it's going north, doesn't build a lot of confidence in my mind that this is anything other than politics," said U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District.

"We don't need politics involved when it comes to deciding who's going to repair vessels for our sailors," Simmons said.

Kevin Sykes, a Naval Sea Systems Command spokesman, said it is not unusual for the Navy to shuffle its maintenance work to balance it between shipyards.

Repair work has become increasingly important in an era when the Navy is building just one submarine a year, and EB splits the work with Northrop Grumman Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia. So EB was encouraged last fall when it was notified that it would be awarded the job. For many years, repair jobs that large have gone to the Portsmouth yard, which is on the Maine-New Hampshire border.

Almost immediately, the congressional delegations from both states appealed the decision directly to the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Vernon Clark, but the Navy stood by its decision.

So in February, the delegations, joined by Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., met with Navy Secretary Gordon England to reopen the issue.

Portsmouth's backers have been critical of the quality and timeliness of the work done at EB.

The Navy's reversal comes less than two weeks before the Department of Defense is slated to release a list of **bases** recommended for **closure**, and for years defense insiders have speculated that Portsmouth could be on it.

Not only is the size of the submarine fleet on the decline - from a Cold War high of 100 to about 40 over the next several years - but new submarines are being built with "life-of-ship" reactor cores, which will eliminate the refuelings that have long sustained Portsmouth.

Officials watching the **Base Realignment** and **Closure**, or BRAC, process were unsure what to infer from the latest Navy move.

"I was stunned," said John C. Markowicz, chairman of the Subbase **Realignment** Coalition, which is seeking to save the Naval Submarine **Base** in Groton. "If I was in Portsmouth, I would have to interpret it as a positive sign.

"But I would also caution that if a **base** appears on the BRAC list, then the decision could change," Markowicz said, and even if Portsmouth keeps the contract, it would probably not interfere with any **closure** process.

It took two years to close the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in New London in the 1990s, he noted, and that was one of the fastest **closures** on record.

"So it is probably good news, but not the final word on the situation," Markowicz said.

San Antonio Express-News (TX)
May 2, 2005

In the cross hairs

By Sig Christenson

TEXARKANA -- Billy May doesn't look like a man whose employer might show up next week on a list of military **bases** that the Pentagon wants to close.

For 10 hours a day, seven days a week, May stands at a bed-sized metal press filled with briny water at the Red River Army Depot turning out pillow-sized mounts for the armor that shields the men and women riding inside Bradley personnel carriers.

It's vital work, and the war in Iraq has turned up the pressure on May and his 2,800 co-workers. It's a bittersweet fact that the Iraqi insurgency might save Red River, once seen as ripe for shutdown by Pentagon analysts in search of efficient installations.

"What cost," asked May, a 25-year veteran here, "can you put on defending the nation?"

That question also is on the minds of those at Naval Station Ingleside, Goodfellow AFB in West Texas and two San Antonio installations, Fort Sam Houston and Brooks City-**Base**. All five are considered potential targets. They're also major economic forces in towns where the line between paychecks and patriotism blurs like a flag in a Gulf Coast gust.

The 2005 Defense **Base Closure** and **Realignment** round promises to affect most of the nation's 400 major installations, with more losers than winners when the BRAC list goes public by May 16.

Anchored in East Texas 18 miles from the Arkansas border, Red River has kept the Army rolling by rehabilitating Bradley armored personnel carriers, Humvees and mobile rocket systems.

May, 48, of College Hill, Ark., and most others here thought they were on borrowed time when a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq on March 19, 2003. They hope for a reprieve now that insurgents have tied up an Army occupation force totally dependent on machines.

The depot is busier than it's been in years. It has jumped from 2.3 million labor hours before 9-11 to 4 million today. A work force of 1,520 at the start of Gulf War II has almost doubled.

Assigned to an assembly line that churns out up to 14 Humvees a day, Robert Gilmore is among Red River's nearly 800 workers hired since last September. Most of them are "term" employees who get benefits and overtime, but no promise of a permanent job.

He came to the depot three years ago after a stranded motorist he helped shared a tip. Fifteen months later he volunteered to work on heavy trucks in Iraq.

"I didn't do that just for Red River," said Gilmore, a 37-year-old Hooks resident who endured dozens of mortar attacks at Camp Anaconda an hour north of Baghdad. "I did that for my soldiers overseas, my cousins in the military and for myself. I wanted to go do my part."

Workers here talk that way because they see a side of the war most don't.

One Humvee testifies to an increasingly competent insurgency, its driver-side windshield hit by 34 bullets but still intact. The right rear passenger door window withstood 20 rounds and a rocket-propelled grenade. Three other RPGs dented the truck, but the soldiers inside walked away.

Those in the Humvee "reset" shop may be able to rebuild the ruined truck.

Red River was listed for **closure** 10 years ago when the Army sought to consolidate its ground combat repair workload into one location. The BRAC commission, concluding that **closure** risked readiness, sent part of Red River's maintenance mission to Anniston Army Depot in northeast Alabama. Red River lost nearly a fifth of its 5,000 workers.

A union town struggling to hold onto its best jobs, Texarkana needs the depot. It's the No. 1 employer and has been a staple of life since 1942.

Bob Godsey's pay almost doubled to 95 cents an hour when he came to a Red River warehouse in 1950. He retired after 25 years and knows of people who drove 90 miles from four states to work at the plant.

"When there's no other place to work, you've got to do something," Godsey, 75, of Texarkana said over breakfast at Shorty's, a favorite of Red River veterans.

Texarkana Chamber of Commerce executive director Jim Cherry said his town's problem is it can't match the economic development efforts of rival East Texas communities like Longview, which is armed with a \$3.2 million annual fund. Texarkana has just \$500,000 a year at hand.

"You ask why we're falling on hard times," said Cherry, whose organization has raised \$250,000 to defend the depot and pays \$19,000 a month to Rhodes & Associates, a Washington lobbying firm. "We're shooting with blanks while everyone else is using elephant guns."

A closed depot would quadruple the area unemployment rate, now 5.8 percent, said Ronald D. Henson, a member of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission. It would take years, he added, to replace depot jobs that pay an average of \$35,000 a year.

Folks like Janice Hampton, 57, and third-generation depot worker Matt Oglesby, a 31-year-old Texarkana native, would leave town. He'd go back to splicing fiber-optic cables, a job that kept him on the road and away from his daughter, Kimberley.

Hampton, a 15-year Red River mechanic who earns \$22 an hour and also worked at Camp Anaconda, wouldn't look back.

"I don't think I'd ever work at Wal-Mart," she said. "I like living in a nice house and driving a nice car."

Ingleside

Tiny Ingleside is a study in the old and new, of what was before the Navy came to town in the late 1980s, what is and what could be as a new BRAC looms.

An H-E-B supermarket is at Texas 361 and FM 1069. A dusty taqueria and an aging neighborhood of modest wood homes are down the road.

A mile farther on Texas 361, the main drag, is the new Ingleside complete with eateries, a Movie Gallery, Navy Fleet and Family Support Center, a \$1.5 million city park and post office in view of a neighborhood of brick homes.

"I'm not going to say it's two cities," said City Manager Mike Rhea. "It's probably two eras."

Once-stagnant Ingleside is riding a boom fueled in part by Naval Station Ingleside, home to 3,900 military and civilian jobs. It's a boom bound to sputter if the **base** is closed as many fear.

Everyone concedes Ingleside is the most vulnerable of four major installations in the Coastal Bend, among them Corpus Christi Army Depot, Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and Naval Air Station Kingsville. The South Texas Military Facilities Task Force will spend \$250,000 this year to defend them and try to lure new missions.

Rhea and task force consultant Gary Bushell point to Ingleside's value to the military, the Pentagon's litmus test for surviving BRAC. The **base** has new buildings, room to build, and Ingleside's cost of living is lower than Navy towns such as Norfolk, Va., and Mayport, Fla., they say.

The homeport is seven miles from the Gulf of Mexico, giving ships a quick route to sea. It has a rare "double-decker" pier as wide as a six-lane freeway and capable of handling any ship. The **base** has potential joint training links to troops in San Antonio, Fort Hood in Killeen and Fort Bliss in El Paso.

Its amenities include tennis courts, baseball fields, a fitness center with trainers, an Olympic-size pool, the world's largest privately donated USO and new apartments. Rockport, Corpus Christi and South Padre Island beaches beckon, as does fishing, hunting, and day-trips to Mexico and San Antonio.

Despite so much going for Ingleside, former Corpus Christi mayor and longtime **base** defender Loyd Neal still worries it still won't be enough.

"The reason why is ever since Mr. Rumsfeld published his 'Thou Shalt Do These Things' (memo), he talked about the **bases** of the 21st century being joint(ly run), he talked about them being multi-tasked," he said, referring to guidelines for deciding if a **base** remains open.

"We checked every one of those boxes. What we've not been able to check for Kingsville or Ingleside is that they're a single-mission **base**."

Ingleside was intended to be the home port for the USS Lexington and the battleship Wisconsin but now serves a minesweeper fleet. It took a big hit when the Navy in 2002 retired the USS Inchon, the anchor of its Mine Warfare Command.

All isn't lost. The Navy has said the command's Mine Warfare Center of Excellence has proved its worth during Gulf War II, and that moving it would be costly and difficult to replicate, said Judy Hawley, former director of the San Patricio County Regional Economic Development Corp.

The Inchon was replaced by a high-speed catamaran that is the minesweeper fleet's command ship, she said, and the Army may store tanks, armored personnel carriers and other equipment in warehouses on the Navy **base** -- if it stays open.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, has used her position as head of a Senate subcommittee to pump millions in new military construction projects into Ingleside. The long-held idea behind such funding efforts is that new buildings improve a **base's** chances of surviving closure or mission **realignment**.

History suggests it would take something as big as the Navy to affect Ingleside the way the homeport did after ground was broken in 1988. The town has grown almost 65 percent, to nearly 11,000, since the Navy arrived.

In the early 1980s, the city might have run a waterline from meter to house a few times a month, said Don Paty, Ingleside's 47-year-old public works chief.

"We stay constantly busy now," he said.

Sailors occupy a quarter to one-third of the town's homes. Sales tax receipts have risen from \$150,000 annually in the early 1990s to \$400,000 today, Rhea said, and are growing at 8 percent a year. Before the homeport was established, the town's sales tax receipts were flat.

A shuttered homeport would come as a blow to Richard Palmietto, who owns Underwater Services, an Ingleside ship repair and inspection firm that gets 20 percent of its gross revenue from the Navy.

But it isn't all about money. The Navy produces skilled, intelligent workers, he said, noting that three of his eight employees are ex-sailors. It's also nurtured his family.

Tall with a hint of a potbelly protruding from beneath his green Underwater Services pullover shirt, Palmietto, 47, recalled meeting his wife, LaDonna, more than 20 years ago at the annual Aransas Pass Shrimporee.

On a cloudy spring afternoon he stood on a small paved road off the **base** and gazed at a steady stream of cars and trucks speeding toward Texas 361, and home.

"This," he said, "is a lot of jobs."

San Angelo

The tree-lined Concho River Walk, in San Angelo's historic district, symbolizes this town's determination to be an oasis in parched West Texas.

But dread lurks beneath pride when talk turns to Goodfellow AFB.

"San Angelo is a retirement community, it's an educational community, it's a military **base** community, an agricultural community," said Mayor J.W. Lown, who ranks his fear of losing the **base** at an 11 on a scale of one to 10. "And you take Goodfellow, and you've taken a quarter of our city away from us."

Goodfellow is the No. 1 employer in San Angelo, population 88,474. The **base** has 6,732 military, civil service, and contract employees and students.

The impact of those numbers is measured as much by the many troops who fall in love with San Angelo, contribute to the community, and retire here.

One reason people here hope Goodfellow will survive is because it provides joint training, a key requirement of this BRAC.

The **base** is the Defense's Department's sole joint training firefighting school. It's home to cryptology, linguistic analysis and imagery instruction for the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines, and has room to absorb additional missions.

Gov. Rick Perry has proposed creating an Arabic language degree program at Angelo State University. He'd take that action if the Air Force keeps Goodfellow open and establishes an Arabic program there, said Robert Black, a Perry spokesman.

San Angelo is taking over sewer and waterline maintenance on Goodfellow in hopes of cutting the Air Force's costs and saving the **base**. Lown led an initiative to provide better weekend bus service from the **base** to town. The local apartment association helps provide homes for troops as Goodfellow builds new dormitories on the installation.

Goodfellow's **closure** would affect everything from property taxes and real estate to commerce, volunteerism and the town's retiree **base**, City Manager Harold Dominguez said.

Retailers would dwindle, vacancies would rise, and rental and home sale prices would fall, he said, noting, "Unlike any metroplex community, we're on our own."

Lupe Puente and others around town share that sense of vulnerability. She'd likely quit her barbershop, the Hair Force, and set up shop in San Antonio. "I'd still keep on cutting wherever I could," said Puente, 35.

Goodfellow's demise would feel much like a divorce after 65 years of marriage. It's been part of the fabric of life since 1940, when work began to create a flying training **base**, and has fueled a doubling of the town's population since its arrival.

Once-vagabond airmen have planted roots here because their sense of community extends beyond the fence running along the 1,135-acre **base**.

After 11 moves in 20 years, retired Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Randy Moore, 50, and his family have found a slice of their old farm in Tipton, Iowa, where corn and beans sprouted in serene fields.

"My folks are from Iowa, my wife's folks are from Iowa," he said. "They come down every year and visit us, and they'd move here in a heartbeat."

Harlan Bruha, a 74-year-old retired Air Force colonel who co-founded the town's minor league baseball team, the Colts, said military and civilians here are tighter than in most places, thanks to a "built-in" respect folks have for those in uniform.

Two members of the 1991 **closure** commission agreed, ranking it among the top 3 percent of the nation for community support.

That backing comes in forms outsiders can't imagine. Over the years families here, among them military and civilian workers at the **base**, have hosted Colts players -- some of whom earn as little as \$500 a month.

Volunteerism is big.

In all, 1,729 Goodfellow workers donated 121,242 hours in 2003, said the family support center's Miles Miller.

Losing Goodfellow would mean a drop-off in the number of homes built for the working poor from six to three each year, said Patsy Kneller, local executive director of Habitat for Humanity. Nine of every 10 volunteers come from the **base**

"Without all those volunteers helping us do all those things," she said, "the community as a whole would be impacted drastically."

Corpus Christi Caller-Times (TX)
May 2, 2005

BRAC might benefit area - Coastal Bend could gain personnel

By Brad Olson and Mike Baird

As communities around the nation have revved up their lobbying and advocacy efforts on behalf of military **bases** in their area, much of the talk has centered on insulating **bases** from **closure**. But many areas, including the Coastal Bend, stand to gain additional personnel and missions as a result of the Defense Department's 2005 **base realignment** and **closure** process, or BRAC.

Local boosters have long talked about the vulnerability of Naval Station Ingleside. However, little has been said about the strengths of the Corpus Christi Army Depot or Naval Air Station Kingsville, both of which could benefit from **closures** in other communities.

Loyd Neal, chairman of the South Texas Military Facilities Task Force, which lobbies on behalf of local **bases**, said that in each of the four past **closure** rounds starting in 1988, the Coastal Bend has either maintained or grown its military presence.

The Pentagon must release a list of **bases** to be closed or restructured by May 16, although many believe the list will come out sometime next week. The most likely candidate for gains on that list, according to one military analyst and local boosters, is the Corpus Christi Army Depot, which opened in 1961.

"Since the Corpus Christi Army Depot is already the leading helicopter maintenance facility in North America, it's logical that activities at other places will tend to be aligned in the direction of Corpus Christi," said Loren Thompson, a military analyst at the Lexington Institute, an Alexandria, Va.-based think tank.

Thompson said Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wants not only to generate billions of dollars in savings, but to "get maximum efficiencies across service lines.

"So we're not just talking about Army helicopters, we're talking about everybody's helicopters, like the Navy and Air Force," he said. "Why wouldn't you want to send those things to Corpus Christi to get economies of scale?"

Possible gains

Each military branch has its own depot system that repairs helicopters and other aircraft. The Naval Air Depot in Cherry Point, N.C., is a slightly bigger operation than the local depot, employing more than 4,000 civilian workers compared with 3,200 here. The Warner Robins Air Logistics Center, near Macon, Ga., repairs all the Air Force's helicopters in addition to several Air Force jets and cargo planes.

All three centers repair helicopters in the military's "Hawk" group, such as the HH-60 "Pave Hawk" for the Air Force, the SH-60 "Sea Hawk" for the Navy and the UH-60 "Black Hawk" for the Army. If the Navy or Air Force depot were shuttered, one possibility, Thompson said, would be for either branch's helicopters to move through Corpus Christi.

The Georgia depot is not considered at risk by military insiders, but the North Carolina center has been the subject of considerable speculation and concern in that state because the depot has been on two previous **closure** lists.

Repair challenges

Depots have not fared well in the most recent **closure** rounds of 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995. Of 10 Army depots that existed in 1976, just five are left, and two of the five were downsized significantly in 1995. In 1993, the Defense Department shuttered three Naval depots in Alameda, Calif.; Norfolk, Va.; and Pensacola, Fla.

The Corpus Christi Army Depot has never been on a **closure** list. With each round of **closures**, the military has sought to consolidate depot operations, moving work in smaller depots to bigger ones that could do the work more efficiently.

Neal said the local Army depot could pick up maintenance work on Air Force or Navy helicopters if the Defense Department decides to streamline its helicopter maintenance capability. One challenge for the local depot would be repairing Navy helicopters worn from corrosion and salt-water damage, compared with Army Black Hawks worn by sand in the Middle East.

"Those kinds of repairs take more time and are very expensive," Neal said.

Going into the **closure** round, one advantage for the local depot is the multi-million dollar private partnership agreements signed with General Electric, Honeywell Aerospace and the Boeing Co., Neal said. The depot, already recognized for productivity in several Government Accountability Office reports, has tripled its capacity to meet surging demands from ongoing military operations in the Middle East. All those factors, Neal and Thompson said, likely will insulate it from **closure**.

Pensacola invaluable

That much can't necessarily be said of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, despite nearly \$1 billion in hurricane damage to Naval Air Station Pensacola and neighboring **bases**, dubbed "the cradle of naval aviation," local leaders say. Many Pensacola-area **bases** have similar training missions as Naval Air Station Corpus Christi.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan last September, speculation about Pensacola's future surfaced, although rumors were quelled when Congress approved more than \$600 million in emergency recovery funding that month.

In the past, **bases** have been closed after sustaining such damage. Homestead Air Force **Base**, south of Miami, was closed in 1993 after being slammed by Hurricane Andrew. Natural disasters are not a driving factor in the closing of **bases**, said retired Capt. Rick Marcantonio, former **base** commander at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and current president of the Navy League's local chapter.

Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Carl Franklin, who co-chaired a group that made Air Force **closure** recommendations for the 1993 BRAC round, said Homestead was closed because repairing 97 percent of the **base's** facilities would cost more than shutting it down.

Homestead and Pensacola are not comparable, Franklin said.

"Pensacola has attributes very much in need by the Navy in today's environment for fleet training in the air," he said, noting the city's port access.

Retired Vice Adm. Jack Fetterman, president of the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation in Pensacola, said the city has infrastructure, such as 14 outlying runways, that could not be duplicated elsewhere.

"There were a lot of rumors that the damage to Pensacola would make it turn out like Homestead," he said. "That was unbelievably naïve. There is no place in the country that could replicate it."

Flight training

The Pensacola Naval Air Station is home to the Blue Angels, the Navy's flight demonstration squadron, as well as the Naval Education and Training Command, which oversees the Chief of Naval Air Training, based in Corpus Christi. Pensacola also hosts Naval Aviation Schools Command and several primary, intermediate and advanced training squadrons. Nearby Naval Air Station Whiting Field is home to more than 40 percent of the Naval air training flight time, including primary, advanced and all helicopter training.

Corpus Christi hosts three primary training squadrons and one intermediate and advanced training squadron, a total of about 26 percent of total training flight hours.

Neal said losing Navy air training in Corpus Christi to Pensacola "has been a constant threat for as long as I know. And it always bubbles up about this time," he said, referring to the imminent **closure** round. The only difference this year was Hurricane Ivan.

Dick Messbarger, executive director of the Greater Kingsville Economic Development Council, said another scenario is to combine all undergraduate flight training under the direction of the Air Force's Air Education Training Command at Randolph Air Force **Base** in San Antonio.

"That's an idea that's been talked about, but these are all rumors," he said.

NAS Kingsville

Naval Air Station Kingsville is another local **base** that stands to gain, perhaps significantly, from the **base closure** round, local officials say.

"Kingsville has a tremendous amount of land that could be shared with the Army or Marines without hampering the naval aviation training they have," Marcantonio said. "Kingsville is really a **base** that could take on the most."

The Kingsville **base** is one of two **bases** that train Navy jet pilots. Its counterpart, in Meridian, Miss., appeared on initial past **closure** lists in 1993 and 1995, and Messbarger said that has "spurred speculation that it'll be on the list this year."

Many believe the **base** is one of the principal reasons U.S. Sen. Trent Lott has so vehemently opposed the **closure** round. Mississippi has several other vulnerable **bases**, but Meridian is among the most vulnerable, given past **closure** rounds.

Lott fought to postpone the **base closure** round last year in the Senate, along with U.S. Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, in the House. Both measures failed by slim margins, but Lott has continued the fight. Earlier this month, he attempted to stall the confirmation of President Bush's appointments to the **closure** commission, although Bush sidestepped the move by appointing most of the commissioners during a Senate recess.

Target range

Another plus for Kingsville, highly touted by local boosters, is a little-used 8,000-acre target range in McMullen County that already accommodates the Navy, Air Force and Texas Air National Guard. The range could become a centerpiece of a joint training center involving all three of the Coastal Bend's installations, including Naval Station Ingleside.

The plan, designed by local military consultant Gary Bushell, would bring Marines to a little-used portion of Padre Island to practice amphibious landings and move troops through to Fort Hood and Fort Bliss. Yet since the idea was presented publicly, no plans have been announced for training exercises that would take place before the Pentagon's list comes out.

Thompson said the **closure** round might not be as ominous as people expect.

"I think there's going to be a lot of **closures** and a lot of realignments, but it's not as imposing as people think," he said. "It's not inconceivable that NAS Corpus Christi could pick up more personnel."

BASE REALIGNMENT/CLOSURE

The Pentagon must release a list of **bases** to be closed or restructured by May 16, although many believe the list will come out sometime during the week of May 9.

Red River Army Depot, Texarkana

NAS Pensacola

Naval Station Ingleside

NAS Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi Army Depot

NAS Kingsville

NAS Meridian

Warner Robins Air Logistics Center, Macon

Naval Air Depot in Cherry Point

San Antonio Express-News (TX)
May 1, 2005

Specter of Kelly haunts S.A. bases

By Sig Christenson

A decade has passed since the order to close Kelly AFB struck with the force of a major earthquake, in one stroke erasing the heart of San Antonio's rich military aviation heritage and what once had been its biggest employer.

When it was done, local leaders dusted themselves off and tried to figure out what went wrong, looking ahead to future **base closure** rounds and the four **bases** that remain.

What they came up with was a pair of initiatives aimed at protecting the city's two most vulnerable installations -- Brooks AFB and Fort Sam Houston.

That gives them reason for hope as the 2005 **Base Realignment** and **Closure** round looms two weeks away. But as BRAC approaches, worry lurks behind the smiles of local boosters who know this round could affect more installations than the four previous rounds combined -- 98 **bases** closed and 66 major mission realignments.

"It's a very uneasy feeling because it's beyond your political control," said Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff, who was the city's mayor during the 1991 and 1995 rounds, and is a key player again in this year's BRAC.

"Usually, when you have a political issue up there, you go to your senators, you go to your congressman and they have a lot to say about it. They don't have a hell of a lot to say about this. They're just voting this up or down when it's over with, so it's a very scary process."

Though people here think Fort Sam has turned the corner, they're holding their breath for Brooks, a hub of brainpower in the Alamo City that almost was closed 10 years ago.

Historic Fort Sam was reinforced by the recent arrival of U.S. Army South into the old Brooke Army Medical Center. That bolstered Fort Sam's anchor, the Army Medical Department Center and School, which trains 30,000 soldiers a year and all combat medics.

A subcommittee headed by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, in turn, pumped \$24 million for two new barracks into the post, a part of \$1.5 billion for installations statewide. Another \$15 million financed construction of a gymnasium, fitness center and guesthouse.

Brooks -- now Brooks City-**Base** -- is a one-of-a-kind installation enjoying boom times in the wake of the deal that saw San Antonio assume the costs of running its physical plant.

As City-**Base** has subsidized the cost of running Brooks, saving the Air Force more than \$9 million a year, it's also drawn in new businesses -- including a mall now under construction.

Despite its novel concept and savings, City-**Base** has no guarantee of success in a BRAC round that's expected to affect virtually all of the nation's 400 large installations.

The complex **closure** analysis process has been highly secretive, with few leaks, prompting nervousness everywhere and many prayers it will be fair among those burned by past rounds.

"If this was about the merits and the facts and the figures, of course I would be very optimistic. Because we do have a good story to tell," said Rep. Charlie Gonzalez, D-San Antonio.

"I'm going to take it on good faith that the process will be objective, that no strings will be pulled, that missions will be looked at based on their value to the national interest," said former Mayor Howard Peak, the city's point man in Brooks' transformation. "And if that's the case, we're going to fare very well."

High stakes game

The stakes are high. All told, the four installations pour \$5 billion a year into the city's economy, ranking the military behind only health care and tourism. They compliment the city's civilian science, research and medical sectors.

Thanks to the military, San Antonio is the nation's only city with three Level 1 trauma centers, two of them -- Brooke Army Medical Center and Wilford Hall Medical Center -- Defense Department hospitals.

The town is also a magnet for military retirees and their dependents, with an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 in greater Bexar County.

Just what, if anything, is lost to BRAC likely will be decided soon. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld must unveil the list of **bases** Pentagon analysts have marked for oblivion no later than May 16. Chances are the list will be released May 13 -- on a Friday -- those familiar with the process say, giving Rumsfeld a clean getaway from town and leaving civic leaders nationwide with good reason to reach for their Maalox.

A nine-member commission will sort through the Pentagon's **closure** recommendations, but at least seven votes will be required to reverse them -- a hedge against congressional tampering.

The commission will visit Texas and other states this summer before delivering its recommendations to President Bush by Sept. 8. If he orders a revision of the BRAC list, it must be sent to Congress for approval no later than Nov. 7.

The Bush administration has pushed hard for a fifth BRAC round that takes aim at a quarter of the military's 260,000 buildings and 28 million acres of land. The sheer number of **bases** at risk of **closure** or a

major **realignment** of their missions is staggering -- 4,869 Defense Department installations and 8,200-plus leased buildings.

Everyone familiar with this **closure** round has listed Brooks, Ingleside Naval Station, Goodfellow AFB in San Angelo and the Red River Army depot in Texarkana as those most vulnerable in Texas. Fort Sam also has appeared on some worry lists.

BAMC and Wilford Hall concern Wolff, in part because the services a decade ago entertained the idea of merging them. The city has received a \$125,000 Defense Department grant to study new uses for the hospitals if one is ordered to close or move some missions. A local firm, the DeLuzio Group, is due to produce a draft report by May 16.

Forging a battle plan

San Antonio's battle to save its **bases** was born in the ashes of Kelly's demise and Brooks' scrutiny in the previous round. As BRAC commissioners toured the city, they saw residents in T-shirts proclaiming, "Save Brooks!" "Save Kelly!"

Peak, then a city councilman, said it was an ill-chosen strategy. The commissioners neither were interested in the impact a **closure** would have on the town, nor the fact that Kelly long had been the source of prosperity for many Hispanics.

"That wasn't their charge. They were looking for ways to save the federal government money," he said. "I learned a bunch from that, and that's what led to Brooks City-**Base**."

Local leaders knew what the Pentagon wanted after Kelly and settled on transforming the decaying, Depression-era old BAMC -- a building that symbolized the Achilles' heel of a post with more than 900 structures at least a half-century old, most of them in use.

City and congressional leaders persuaded the Army to allow a private firm to renovate the old BAMC building and then lease it back to the service. The ramshackle building was revamped in nine months under an agreement in which the Pentagon leased it for 50 years to Orion Partners Inc.

Army South, a command with 504 military and civilian workers and links to 32 nations in the Caribbean and South and Central America, arrived in 2003.

Another key command, the 5th Army at the post's Quadrangle, will realign to the U.S. Army North next year and focus on homeland defense, a military source said. It now deals with disasters such as the shuttle breakup as well as that mission, and could see its force double from the current mark of 250. The 5th Army's commander, Lt. Gen. Robert T. Clark, has recommended it remain here.

At Brooks, the only way to save the **base** was to cut its costs, but with no conventional answers to the problem, local leaders came up with a radical idea: City-**Base**.

It called on the city to take over the 1,300-acre property from the Pentagon and lease back most of its facilities to the Air Force. City-**Base** also aimed to recruit retail and research outlets in hopes of further reducing costs, and work to lure high-tech firms there that could conduct joint research projects with the Air Force.

The idea was brushed off by some in the Pentagon but eventually found favor with then-Air Force Secretary F. Whitten Peters. Texas lawmakers, particularly Hutchison and then-Rep. Ciro D. Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, crafted a bill allowing City-**Base** to occur as a one-of-kind experiment.

City-**Base** has done more than reduce the Air Force's operations and maintenance costs. Its centrifuge has been used to train NASA astronauts, even some of the original Mercury 7 of the 1960s. It studies all samples of suspected flu stains worldwide in a project with the Centers for Disease Control. Vaccines are developed each year on the basis of research done at Brooks and other locations. Soil, water and air samples from installations around the globe are analyzed here, too.

Brooks has been a center of joint-service directed energy research since 1992. About 400 researchers study the effect lasers, microwaves and radio frequency waves have on military personnel, with one effort looking at the impact of cell phones on the human brain.

Brooks City-**Base** Center, a mall under construction on the installation just off Military Drive, will be anchored by a Wal-Mart. So far, companies have brought close to 1,000 workers to the **base**.

Retired Brig. Gen. John Jernigan, executive director of the San Antonio Military Missions Task Force, said the **base's** Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine could become another joint unit. He pointed to the commercial project led by Wal-Mart and increased activity by private research firms as proof that City-**Base** works as planned.

Sources familiar with Brooks say the Air Force is negotiating with three firms to move part of their labs to the **base**, a deal that could lead to them taking over the service's drug-testing operation. The Air Force lab on **base** long has tested urine samples for all airmen.

Assessing risks

Though Lackland AFB is considered safe by many because it is the Air Force's sole basic training facility, some Defense Department officials have raised the idea of creating a single boot camp for all branches of service.

Likewise, Randolph AFB could lose its instructor pilot and joint navigator training mission if BRAC planners settle on a single facility elsewhere.

Both Randolph and Lackland, though, could be huge winners if the commission picks San Antonio as the site of a future joint training facility.

Aware of the stakes, communities around the country have gone on a spending spree for Washington lobbyists. A campaign in Texarkana, whose Red River Army Depot is the town's top employer with 2,800 workers, is paying one of those Beltway firms \$19,000 a month.

Armed with \$600,000 in funding from the city, county, City Public Service and Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, the SAMM task force has yet to hire a lobbyist. Jernigan said the firms have gotten no better access to the Pentagon than his group.

Those familiar with the administration's handling of this year's BRAC describe the process as mysterious and tough to penetrate. Top civilian officials such as Fred Kuhn, a deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force, are free to meet with lawmakers and the public. But the man in charge of developing the service's BRAC list, Fred Pease, is off limits.

A number of local leaders believe Lackland and Randolph should emerge relatively unscathed unless the Pentagon dramatically recasts the way it trains its forces.

Lackland, the home of all Air Force boots, has many other missions and room to grow. Randolph includes the Air Education and Training Command headquarters that supervises 13 **bases**, five of them in Texas. It's

also home to the Air Force Personnel Center and 19th Air Force, which oversees AETC's flight instruction operations, but unlike Lackland has little room for accepting new missions.

History is one reason why people here are edgy. The Air Force tried to close the then-Brooks AFB in 1995 and move its missions to Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio but later removed the **base** from its BRAC list. Fort Sam's concern is maintaining and renovating its historic buildings. Camp Bullis, where medics get field training before deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan, is becoming encircled by residential development.

BAMC is just 10 years old and busy treating soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. Wilford Hall is an aging facility, having opened in 1957, but an Air Force and Army study last year "validated" the way both hospitals are used, a BRAC expert said. Its survival would bring relief to Wolff and other leaders, in part because Wilford Hall has 600 physicians and 723 nurses, and logs 100 civilian trauma patients a month.

Jernigan is optimistic about the city's chances this time around, but leaders like Gonzalez haven't forgotten Kelly. On the night before the **base** was closed a decade ago, then-Rep. Frank Tejeda, D-San Antonio, told key leaders here that the "highest sources" had told him Kelly was safe.

"Man, the next day it was devastating news," Gonzalez said, adding that San Antonio has learned not to take anything for granted because of that experience. "We don't want déjà vu all over again."

Corpus Christi Caller-Times (TX)
May 1, 2005

Thousands of jobs hang in BRAC balance - Economic impact of military bases in Coastal Bend adds up to nearly \$1B

By Brad Olson

More than 23,000 jobs and almost \$1 billion are at stake this year in the Coastal Bend, as the Defense Department prepares to downsize or close up to 25 percent of the nation's military infrastructure.

By May 16, the military will release the 2005 "**Base Realignment and Closure**" list, or BRAC. If one of the Coastal Bend's three military **bases** - Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Naval Air Station Kingsville or Naval Station Ingleside - closed, the area would lose a major segment of its economy, even a whole industry at once.

The ripple effect from a **closure** of even one **base** would reach thousands of people in the community - people such as Ron Pifer, who manages maintenance, distribution and repair efforts for the Mine Warfare Fleet at Naval Station Ingleside for FDGM, Inc., a subsidiary of Fincantieri, an Italian shipbuilder.

Pifer supervises 24 employees from a new 15,000-square-foot office warehouse and maintenance facility near the **base**. The average wage of 20 of the employees is about \$15 an hour, or \$31,000 a year.

Most own local homes, have children in local schools and go to local doctors and dentists for health care. Pifer, for instance, buys a new car each year from local dealerships.

Economic estimates are that most people spend 70 percent of their wages locally. The loss of Pifer and his staff would amount to more than \$400,000 that would not be spent in the area annually. Those employees also pay taxes to schools, cities and counties in the area.

Ripple effect broad

But the ripple would extend beyond the employees and the money they spend. It also would reach local insurer John Otto, a partner of Arvak Insurance Group, who manages an insurance account for the employees. It would reach local machine shops in Aransas Pass and Corpus Christi that supply parts to FDGM.

Pifer lives in a dream house he had built in Rockport seven years ago, and his wife and daughter also work under him for FDGM.

"Personally and professionally, I have so much to lose if this **base** closes down," he said.

If a **base** closed, Pifer's plight would be repeated with several thousand people at once while a major local industry vanished.

Local **base** boosters say the likelihood of a **closure** is slim for Naval Air Station Kingsville or Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, but concerns that Naval Station Ingleside might close have surfaced since late last year. Although a **closure** would have a major immediate impact on each area, local officials say the economy would be able to rebound after a few years.

The military has a \$971 million annual impact on the Coastal Bend economy, according to a 2001 study of the Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corp. That includes 23,181 total jobs, half of which come directly from military payrolls and half from suppliers and contractors, local firms and businesses that sell products to military personnel.

\$60M in taxes

The local military presence accounts for almost \$60 million in annual tax revenue for area cities, counties and school districts, according to the study.

Dick Messbarger, executive director of the Greater Kingsville Economic Development Council, said a study he commissioned shows the **base** there has a \$111 million impact on that area alone. Aside from losing a great deal of the military's payroll stemming from the **base**, contractors such as Mike Quintanilla would have to look for new work if the **base** closed.

Quintanilla, project supervisor for Norfolk, Va.-based Automation Precision Technology, LLC, which handles public works at the Kingsville **base**, has 20 employees working under him who live in Corpus Christi, Beeville, Alice and Kingsville, he said.

Military-related employees' loss of buying power would cause a contraction all over the Coastal Bend, especially in markets that depend on consumer spending, such as the retail and service industries. It could mean fewer convenience stores and major retail outlets, fewer bank branches and fewer people to buy homes or rent apartments. All of that equates to fewer jobs, said Ron Kitchens, president and CEO of the Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corp.

Toby Tsongsavanh, owner of Toby's Thai Food in Ingleside, said about one-third of his customers come from the **base**.

32% military-related

Ashley Smith, marketing director for Navy Army Federal Credit Union, said 32 percent of the credit union's customers are active duty or retired military personnel or civilian workers. In 2001, the credit union diversified and began serving customers not affiliated with the military to prepare for the impact of a **closure**, Smith said.

But the credit union has no specific plans for a **base closure**, she said.

"There's no way for us to say at this point how many branches we'd have to close or anything like that," she said.

Gene Guernsey, a local agent with ReMax Metro Properties and a member of the military affairs committee for the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce, said he didn't think any of the **bases** will close. If one did, it could have a short-term effect on the King's Crossing development, since a number of high-ranking officers live in that neighborhood. It also could affect new homes built in the \$90,000 to \$100,000 range in Portland, or the apartment market in Ingleside, where a majority of the sailors are enlisted personnel.

Corpus Christi Assistant City Manager Oscar Martinez said about half the city's general fund depends on property and sales taxes. A **base closure** would mean a drop in property values and a major loss of sales tax revenue, which also could hinder the city's ability to sell bonds, he said.

"It would be a major blow to our revenue trend," Martinez said.

Martinez did see one positive hypothetical possibility from a **closure**.

"The property in which the **bases** exist is federal property," he said. "If that land is somehow converted to private use, we would see some commercial activity that could benefit us in the long term."

Impact on schools

A **closure** also would immediately reduce school populations. In Ingleside, more than 20 percent of the students have parents in the military. Ed Lyman, superintendent of Ingleside Independent School District, said a large concentration of students is in elementary school.

"It would probably impact us for a year or two," Lyman said.

The district is building a new elementary school now to accommodate major growth in the area. Even if the **base** closed, Lyman said, the school still would fill almost to capacity. The **closure** would only delay construction of another school for about a year, he said. Already, developers are making plans for housing, restaurants and shopping areas around the school.

Three proposed liquefied natural gas, or LNG, plants are driving much of the land speculation and development around the school and in the community, he said.

Two of the three LNG sites would be near Gregory and one would be built next to existing OxyChem facilities adjacent to the Navy **base**. Kiewit Offshore Services also is vying to build an offshore LNG terminal. Taken together, the construction of the facilities could bring thousands of temporary jobs and a few hundred permanent jobs.

So far, only one proposal, from Houston-based Cheniere Energy, has received federal authorization to begin construction, which the company says will begin later this year. Even with the permitting approved on the other projects, the companies may eventually decide to build somewhere else.

Lyman said Ingleside already is preparing for the influx the plants would bring.

"We hope the **base** doesn't close," he said. "We don't want to see a reduction in our enrollment, either. But given the other activity and growth in the area, it's not going to impact us tremendously."

Graphic: THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Economists say industries have ripple effects that reach other industries in any economy. Here's the ripple effect of the military on the Coastal Bend economy. The **bases** support:

10,537 Direct jobs and \$516 million in salaries

3,187 suppliers and contractors at the **bases**

2,608 local firms doing business with suppliers and contractors

12,644 indirect and induced jobs and \$455 million in salaries

23,181 total jobs and \$971 million in salaries

18.5% of the area's wages*

*For 2003 wages, the latest year all data were available

Sources: Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corp.; Texas Workforce Commission

Graphic: CAUSE AND EFFECT

Closure of a local **base** would mean the loss of thousands of jobs and would be felt wherever those who lose jobs would have spent their money. Other services used by those workers would also be affected.

HOUSING

Prices drop as the housing market is flooded

SCHOOLS

Thousands of students out of local schools

RETAIL

Millions of dollars less spent on cars, food, gas and other goods

TAXES

Losing almost \$60 million in municipal, county and school revenues

SMALL BUSINESS

Hundreds of businesses that serve the **bases** lose revenues and perhaps workers

State Journal-Register, The (Springfield, IL)
April 30, 2005

Pentagon: No veto on Guard bases / Illinois officials insist governor can keep 183rd in Springfield

By Otto Kreisher

WASHINGTON - The Pentagon has told the nation's governors that, contrary to the views of Illinois' chief executive, they do not have a veto over what the **Base Realignment** and **Closure** process does with National Guard units in their states.

But Illinois officials insisted Friday that the law is on their side.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich and members of the state's congressional delegation - including House Speaker Dennis Hastert, a Republican - sent a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in March arguing that federal law prohibits the military from closing or moving a Guard unit without the governor's permission.

In a tactfully worded response and in a spokesman's statements, the Pentagon said they are wrong.

The resolution of the legal dispute, which could move into the federal courts as the **base closure** process proceeds, could have significant impact this year because of heavy use of the Guard and reserves in the war on terrorism.

Because of their need to use the part-time warriors in Afghanistan and Iraq, the services are looking at more closely aligning the reserve and active forces, which could mean housing the units closer together.

That is particularly true for the Air Force, which is planning to make significant cuts in its force, particularly its F-16 fighters and C-130 transports, and wants to merge more of its active and reserve units. Many of those airplanes are in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve.

Those signals in advance of the upcoming **base closure** round have made Illinois officials anxious about the fate of the 183rd Fighter Wing at Springfield's Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport and the 182nd Airlift Wing at the Greater Peoria Regional Airport. The 183rd flies F-16s and the 182nd flies C-130s.

In an attempt to shield those units, Illinois officials cited a section of federal law that says Guard units may not be "relocated or withdrawn under this chapter without the consent of the governor of the state."

But a letter that a Pentagon spokesman said had been sent to Blagojevich and members of Congress said that for BRAC to "achieve our objectives" the process "must involve all of our installations, including those used by the reserve component. Please be assured that the Department's BRAC recommendations will comply with all applicable legal requirements."

A Pentagon spokesman and a BRAC expert for the Congressional Research Service both said Friday that the law cited by Illinois officials does not apply to BRAC and does not prohibit the Pentagon from relocating National Guard units.

Although the letter, which was signed by Michael Wynne, the undersecretary for acquisition, technology and logistics, was dated April 12, the signers of the Illinois letter said Friday they had not seen the response.

"The bottom line for me is, I have not received a letter. I don't believe the letter was sent," said Rep. Ray LaHood, R-Peoria. "I sent them a letter citing a provision of the law. ... I'm expecting a response from the secretary of defense."

Angela Benander, spokeswoman for Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said his office had not receive Wynne's letter and stood by the delegation's legal opinion, which she said was approved by the state attorney general.

Benander also cited several cases in previous **closure** rounds in which Air National Guard **bases** were closed, only to be restored in the subsequent BRAC, which she said was a result of the legal barrier.

But the records of the four previous BRACs shows at least five Air Guard facilities that were closed and the units moved elsewhere.

In none of the cases in which Guard **closures** were reversed did the commission report cite any legal restraint, and the 1993 commission specifically recommended moving reserve units onto active **bases**.

DefenseLink
May 3, 2005

By John D. Banusiewicz
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 3, 2005 - The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission began its work here today.

Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi, former secretary of veterans affairs, administered the oath of office to the eight commissioners who will evaluate the Defense Department's recommendations for changes in U.S. force posture.

After evaluating DoD's recommendations, the independent BRAC Commission will submit its own list to the president for review and approval, then to Congress, which must accept or reject the list in its entirety.

"The Congress and the president look to this commission to provide an unbiased, independent assessment and clear 'eye of reality check' on DoD's proposals for restructuring the base infrastructure supporting our armed forces," Principi said.

Principi said the commission's work must reflect that while the United States devotes great resources to its defense, those resources are limited. "Every dollar consumed in redundant, unnecessary, obsolete, inappropriately designed or located infrastructure is a dollar not available to provide the training that might save a Marine's life, purchase the munitions to win a soldier's firefight, or fund the advances necessary to ensure continued dominance of the air or the seas."

The commission chairman acknowledged that the BRAC process will affect people. "The words 'closure' and 'realignment' are easy to write on paper," he said, "but they do have profound effects on communities and the people who bring those communities to life. The ripples of the proposals the secretary of defense will present to our nation and to us will be tsunamis in the communities they hit." But no decision on closure or realignment will be arbitrary, he added.

"The Congress, in authorizing the 2005 BRAC, recognized the necessity for cost-effective operation of our armed forces," Principi said. "The Congress, in establishing this commission and in setting forth the

standards against which we are charged to measure DoD's proposals, also ensured these decisions would not be made in a vacuum, and that DoD's proposals and their rationale and supporting data would be subject to independent analysis and assessment."

DoD must submit its list of recommended closures and realignments to the commission by May 16, and the commission must send its report to the president by Sept. 8.

The 2005 BRAC commissioners are:

- Former Nevada Rep. James H. Bilbray, who was a member of House committees on foreign affairs, armed services and intelligence. He served in the Army Reserve from 1955 to 1963.
- Philip Coyle of California, a senior adviser to the Center for Defense Information. He has served at DoD as an assistant secretary of defense and as director of operational test and evaluation.
- Retired Navy Adm. Harold W. Gehman Jr., who served more than 35 years on active duty, including duty as NATO's supreme allied commander, Atlantic, and as commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command.
- Former Utah Rep. James V. Hansen, who served on the House Armed Services Committee. He served in the Navy from 1951 to 1955.
- Retired Army Gen. James T. Hill, whose 36-year career culminated with duty as commander of U.S. Southern Command.
- Retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton, who served in uniform for 34 years, culminating as commander of Air Education and Training Command.
- Samuel Knox Skinner, who served as President George H.W. Bush's chief of staff and as secretary of transportation. He served in the Army Reserve from 1960 to 1968.
- Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Sue Ellen Turner of Texas, a member of the American Battle Monuments Commission. She served for 30 years, most recently as the director of nursing services in the Office of the Air Force Surgeon General.



DAILY BRIEFING May 4, 2005

Pentagon review could conflict with base closing panel

By Megan Scully

Members of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission Wednesday expressed concern that decisions made during a separate Pentagon review of the military's force structure, plans and capabilities could render their base-closing work obsolete.

The Defense Department is working on the congressionally mandated Quadrennial Defense Review, which it will send to Congress next February along with the fiscal 2007 defense budget request. But the commission must submit its list of recommended base closings to the White House in September, long before the Pentagon completes its work on the quadrennial review.

Commissioner Samuel Skinner, a former Transportation secretary, said the schedule "seems to be a little like the tail wagging the dog." And Commission Chairman Anthony Principi asked top Pentagon officials whether the QDR ultimately will supersede the commission's findings.

To prevent a disconnect between the two reviews, Principi called on the Pentagon to keep the commission updated on key decisions made over the course of the sweeping quadrennial review and to respond promptly to all information requests. The Defense Department was slow to reply to previous BRAC commissions' requests for background material and other information during base-closing rounds in the 1990s, Principi said.

Ryan Henry, the Pentagon's undersecretary for defense policy, assured commissioners that he would keep them updated on the QDR findings over the next several months by holding periodic classified hearings. He also noted that the QDR team will take the BRAC commission's findings into account as they compile the massive review.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon's Global Posture Review, a look at the military's presence overseas, will also help to inform the QDR and BRAC processes. All three reviews, which are under way simultaneously, are designed to be complementary to one another.

Wednesday's hearing was the third in two days for the commission, which officially got to work during a [swearing-in ceremony Tuesday](#).

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is expected to send his list of base closing and realignment recommendations to lawmakers sometime next week. The commission then will analyze the department's findings before submitting its own list to President Bush Sept. 8.



DAILY BRIEFING May 4, 2005

Base-closing commission gets underway with briefing on threats

By Megan Scully

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission heard broad testimony Tuesday from top intelligence officials on current and future threats to the United States, a first step in a four-month process that ultimately will decide the shape of domestic defense infrastructure.

"This is all part of the process to absorb information, get threat assessments [and understand] their impact on the force structure," BRAC Chairman Anthony Principi said after the hearing. He added that the testimony did not lead to any conclusions about which bases should close and which ones the military needs.

The open hearing was the panel's second on Tuesday; another session took place Wednesday morning. David Gordon, chairman of the national intelligence committee at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, led a panel of witnesses that gave the commission a synopsis of both state and non-state threats.

None of the members of the panel, which also included representatives from the State Department and the Defense Intelligence Agency, could offer commissioners specific information on which capabilities and installations the military will need to combat threats for the next 15 to 20 years.

However, the panel members stressed that unconventional tactics such as sabotage, terrorism, information attacks and weapons of mass destruction used by terrorists, insurgents and other non-state enemies might alter how the military fights its battles.

"They don't want to fight the American way of war," Gordon said. "Enemies try to level the playing field so we're unable to fight the way we want to fight."

International terrorism is continuing to grow and is becoming increasingly decentralized, with groups and individuals popping up around the world, Gordon said.

At the same time, the military must remain prepared to fight state enemies, with North Korea and Iran possibly posing serious threats to the United States and its allies for the next decade or longer. China and India, two rising political and military powers in Asia, also are areas to watch, Gordon said.

The nation's response to global threats "affects the U.S. military in dramatic ways and affects the work of this commission," said retired Army Gen. James Hill, a BRAC commissioner. In particular, he said, the military might need to change the way it trains troops, increasing police and security forces.

The commission will meet again today to hear testimony from top Defense officials on a host of ongoing Pentagon studies, including the sweeping Quadrennial Defense Review and the Global Posture Review.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is expected to send his list of recommended base closings and realignments to Capitol Hill next week. The commission must analyze Rumsfeld's list and submit its own recommendations to the White House by Sept. 8.

Los Angeles Times
May 5, 2005

Base Areas On The Defensive

With the Pentagon's list of recommended military closures looming, state officials and communities work to save local facilities.

By Tony Perry, Times Staff Writer

SAN DIEGO — The Pentagon's list of recommended military base closures expected later this month has already struck economic fear among officials from states with bases.

Nowhere is that apprehension greater than in California, which has 30 major bases and dozens of smaller military installations, 11.3% of the nation's total. That is more than any other state, according to the California Institute for Federal Policy Research.

The release of the Pentagon's list will start a nationwide, base-by-base review by a presidential commission that will forward its findings to President Bush and Congress for a final decision.

Four previous rounds of base closures show that being on the Pentagon's initial list is virtually a death knell: Nearly 85% of bases listed by the Pentagon have been closed or downsized.

To protect its bases, California's politicians, civic groups and military boosters have been vigorously lobbying the Pentagon for months.

One of the more expensive lobbying efforts has been waged by the Los Angeles Air Force Base Regional Alliance, which has spent more than \$1 million in defense of the base.

Smaller communities may have spent less, but their campaigns have been equally vigorous.

"We're in full defense mode," said Patricia Morris, a city official in Barstow, which is trying to save a Marine Corps vehicle repair facility.

"My heart will be pumping hard until I see that list," said retired Air Force Col. Phil Rizzo, leading the effort to save March Air Reserve Base in Riverside.

"We'll fight all the way," said San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy; San Diego County has six major Navy and Marine Corps bases, more bases than any other region.

By law, the Pentagon has until May 16 to release the list, but local officials expect it sooner.

For California, the possible losses are enormous. Defense spending in the state is approximately \$39 billion a year, with 279,000 people on the payroll, including active-duty military, civilians, reservists and the National Guard, according to the California Council on Base Support and Retention, formed in November by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In a letter to President Bush this week, Schwarzenegger wrote that California supports the nation's military "better than any other state."

Even before the governor formed his committee to save California bases, communities had launched their own efforts to persuade the Pentagon to spare local facilities.

Part of California's civic fright is the result of its having lost more bases and more jobs than any other state in the post-Cold War cutbacks of 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995. California lost 29 bases, more than 93,000 jobs and an estimated \$10 billion a year in revenue.

Despite California's lobbying efforts, this year's base closings may be even less susceptible to lobbying and politicking than previous rounds. The law has been changed to make it more difficult for the Base Realignment and Closure Commission appointed by Bush to alter the Pentagon's closure list.

Also, the Pentagon's stated priorities for selecting which bases to close or realign have been amended to place an even greater emphasis on getting troops ready for combat and forcing branches of the military to cooperate.

Information about job loss and other economic effects of base closing is less important in the Pentagon playbook. Pleas late last year from cities and counties for the Pentagon to give greater weight to economic factors were not successful.

The closure commission began hearings this week in Washington to map its review process once the Pentagon's list is released.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plan to transform the U.S. military is evolving, making it difficult to determine which bases — particularly which smaller ones — fit into his thinking, said John Pike, director of Washington-based <http://www.globalsecurity.org>, which analyzes U.S. military trends.

Still, California officials argue that bases in their communities have supported U.S. offensives in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Cargo planes from Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield have been essential to getting troops and equipment to both regions, they said. Beale Air Force Base in Yuba City is home to the U-2 spy plane and the unmanned reconnaissance vehicle called GlobalHawk, which the Marine Corps said was vital during the November battle for Fallouja.

Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Alice Astafan, now chief executive of a Sacramento-area business development firm, carried that message to Washington. The two Northern California bases, she said, are nothing less than "absolutely vital to American defense."

Lassen County Supervisor John Hanson said he is confident the Pentagon will realize that troops in Iraq benefit from the logistics support and the retrofitting of Humvees being done by the Sierra Army Depot. With 800 employees, the depot is also the biggest employer in a county of 25,000.

San Diego officials note that Marines trained at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and based at Camp Pendleton, backed by San Diego-based ships and warplanes, played a decisive role in toppling the Taliban and Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Monterey is lobbying to save its facilities, including the Defense Language Institute and Naval Postgraduate School. The postgraduate school was on the 1993 list and is one of the few facilities saved when the Base Realignment and Closure Commission overruled the Pentagon.

Still, Monterey has received a federal grant to plan what to do if one of its bases was closed.

"We're not planning to lose our facilities. We're not expecting to lose them," said Fred Cohn, deputy city manager in Monterey. "But it wouldn't be prudent if we didn't contemplate that possibility."

Cohn noted that federal law prohibits a facility from being targeted for closure based on the surrounding community's having received a planning grant.

The Oxnard Harbor District has an idea for converting some of the wharves at Port Hueneme to civilian use if Naval Base Ventura County was closed or downsized.

Without advocating the base's closure, port officials have pitched their idea to the Pentagon, angering local officials on a civic committee trying to keep the base off the hit list.

"If you use the wrong words, it's like feeding raw meat to the system," said committee member Tom Nielsen.

In other locales, governments are working to ensure that Pentagon planners not get the wrong idea about a lack of public support.

In Riverside County, planning directors of cities near March Air Reserve Base are promoting a model ordinance to restrict building near the base.

In San Diego, officials pressured the airport commission to stop even talking about possible use of the Marine recruit depot, Camp Pendleton or Miramar Marine Corps Air Station for a civilian airport to replace the cramped Lindbergh Field, lest such talk lead the Pentagon to believe San Diegans are not united in their effort to save their bases.

In previous Base Realignment and Closure Commission rounds, the nine-member commission could replace a facility on the Pentagon's list with one of the commission's choosing with a simple majority of five votes. Now that process takes seven votes. The commission is required to forward its list of recommendations to the president.

At a recent congressional hearing, Philip Grone, deputy undersecretary of defense for installation and environment, said the Pentagon may start shutting down construction projects at bases even before the commission makes its final recommendations.

Once the commission rules on the Pentagon's proposals, the president has the option of accepting or rejecting the list in its entirety — all or nothing. If he accepts the list, it goes to Congress, which has the same options.

Although it lacks planes or a runway, the Los Angeles Air Force base employs thousands of engineers and specialists involved in the design and purchase of satellites, launch vehicles and satellite ground stations — the kind of technology used in the air campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We have the infrastructure to accomplish the space mission like no place in the world," said Redondo Beach Councilman John Parsons, a leader of the Los Angeles Air Force Base Regional Alliance. "We're talking about mission success and lives saved."

And how is Parsons feeling as the unveiling of the Pentagon list nears?

"I'm nervous," he said.

Times staff writer Catherine Saillant contributed to this report.

San Diego Union-Tribune
May 4, 2005
Pg. 1

Base-Closing Odds May Favor S.D.

County's facilities probably safe, say defense experts

By Rick Rogers, Staff Writer

Handicapping U.S. military bases for the next round of closings is more art than science, but some see a payday for San Diego County at the finish line.

The Defense Department is expected to nominate scores of the country's roughly 425 major installations for closure or adjustments by May 16. Its list will go to a nine-member federal commission that yesterday started briefings on the Base Realignment and Closure process, or BRAC.

Which bases will land on the list has military communities from coast to coast abuzz and defense experts trying to pick the winners.

"I'm guessing the military will follow the civilian population by moving units to the Southeast and West," said Loren Thompson, chief operating officer for the Lexington Institute, an independent public policy research group in Arlington, Va.

He said he expects Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas to come out winners. Those states have bases that can accept new units, have traditionally supported the military and still benefit from a relatively low cost of living.

"The West should come out second best," Thompson added. "In general, San Diego is quite safe because it has critical mass for the Navy and Marine Corps. It is more likely to attract than lose folks. I think the Northeast is going to do quite badly."

Other experts weren't so sure the BRAC list, which could contain upward of 130 sites, would follow a geographical trend. But even they see good signs for San Diego County.

"I am puzzled as to where base closure is going to come from," said John Pike, a defense analyst from GlobalSecurity.org., a defense group based in Alexandria, Va. "Past base closure rounds were driven by force structure cuts, as when the Army went from 18 to 10 divisions. The military is not getting smaller now.

"I would, however, expect the big fish to eat the little fish and, on balance, San Diego should gain."

Most military experts hesitated to name the little fish, but not Thompson.

He suggested that operations from the Naval Aviation Depot in Jacksonville, Fla., the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Albany, Ga., or the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Barstow could be moved to North Island Naval Air Station.

Thompson said the transfer would make sense for repairing battered equipment being hauled back from Iraq by San Diego-based ships.

Rep. Howard McKeon, R-Santa Clarita, whose district includes Barstow, did not comment on the potential move.

Erik Bruvold, a spokesman for the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp., said such a relocation would be welcome.

He said the region's business and government leaders are cautiously optimistic that San Diego County will keep its 14 major military facilities – which account for \$18 billion a year in revenues, or 15 percent of the gross regional product – and maybe add a command or two.

Such optimism is based on precedent.

While California has lost 93,546 military-related jobs because of base closures since 1988, San Diego County has gained 6,099 – by far the most of any region in the state, according to an April study by the California Institute for Federal Policy Research.

However, the region's political and business leaders aren't taking chances.

In the past 20 months, the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. has spent \$600,000 – \$500,000 of it from private donations – to lobby military officials on the merits of keeping bases in San Diego County, Bruvold said.

Defense experts differ on what, if anything, communities get for their lobbying. But all agree the best way to avoid closure or realignment is to stay off the BRAC list from the beginning, said Jeremiah Gertler, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., and a BRAC commission staff member during the 1995 round of closures.

A marked base's supporters can argue before the commission that their installation was not properly evaluated based on established Defense Department criteria, which lean heavily upon military need.

If a base in San Diego County is picked for closure, the region's lobbyists can tap a contingency fund to conduct studies and hire expert witnesses to make a case for reversing the decision.

Eighty-five percent of the bases listed by the Defense Department are shuttered. The commission can add or subtract bases before forwarding its recommendations to President Bush in September.

The president must accept or reject the commission's list without making changes. Then Congress will get the list and also must approve or reject it as a whole.

The word in Washington, D.C., Gertler said, is that Defense Department leaders will issue the longest closure list ever. They're well aware of Congress' strong dislike for the BRAC process, Gertler said, and believe this could be their last chance for years to downsize military installations.

During the last BRAC round a decade ago, 27 major bases were closed and 17 realigned. At the time, California lost 15,058 military and civilian jobs due to closures, while the rest of the country lost a combined 16,362, according to the California Institute study.

This time around, the Defense Department is trying to shed 23 percent excess capacity while figuring out where to base 70,000 troops returning from Europe and Asia, said the Government Accountability Office.

In recent months, Rumsfeld has tried to allay concerns by suggesting that base closures would not be as massive as initially believed. However, the worries continue.

"The level of fear and paranoia (in some military communities) is extremely intense," said Chris Hellman, a defense expert at the Center for Arms Control and Non-proliferation in Washington, D.C. "All the communities are doing their best to save their bases."

Closure-proof sites, said Gertler, are the ones that multitask and have unique attributes, such as Miramar Marine Corps Air Base's access to air space in the Pacific Rim or Camp Pendleton's vast firing ranges and ocean access.

"What the (Defense) Department is looking for in this round is versatility. Instead of looking at bases as Army, Navy or Air Force, they are looking at what the bases can do," Gertler said. "They are explicitly ignoring the service label on each base."

He added: "You can drive a tank the same way in Colorado as you can in California, but it is the unique qualities" that will keep one base open while the other is closed.

Meanwhile, San Diego's political turmoil won't play any role in the BRAC process, Thompson and O'Hanlon agreed.

They also said they doubted that regional concerns, such as the desire for a new airport, would be a factor in deciding whether, for example, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego or the Miramar base should be closed.

The announcement is likely to come before the May 16 deadline because of a wrinkle in the calendar.

Because May 16 is a Monday and the Defense Department must submit the list for publication in the Federal Register one workday earlier – in this case on Friday May 13 – some are calling it "Black Friday."

Whatever day the list comes out, there will be people jubilant and people deflated.

"The easy decisions have been made," Gertler said. "There are only hard decisions now. The loser in this process is any community that pretends it can't lose."

Boston Globe
May 4, 2005

Mass. Turns Up Heat To Keep Bases Open

Hires top consultants to sway commission

By Bryan Bender, Globe Staff

WASHINGTON -- Massachusetts has launched a full-court press to spare Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford and the Army's Soldier System Center in Natick from closure, relying on top Washington consultants to defend the facilities as an independent commission prepares to review dozens of military bases later this month.

The campaign is occurring as the Base Realignment and Closure Commission held its first meeting in Washington, D.C., yesterday and the chairman of the panel said base closings "will be tsunamis in the communities they hit." Anthony Principi, the commission's chairman, promised a "clear-eyed reality check" of the Pentagon's recommendations.

Communities across the country are bracing for the release, no later than May 16, of Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld's recommendations for which of the nation's 425 military bases to close or downsize -- the first in a decade.

The two Massachusetts facilities could still be spared, but Bay State politicians and industry leaders are not taking any chances.

They recently hired Alan Dixon, who chaired the 1995 base closure commission, and retired Air Force General Ronald Fogleman to make the case for why "nontraditional" facilities such as Hanscom, where much of the Air Force's cutting-edge research is done, and the Army research laboratory in Natick should receive special consideration as commissioners crisscross the country this summer to analyze the Pentagon's recommendations.

Dixon, a former Democratic senator from Illinois, and Fogleman, once the Air Force chief of staff, are working on behalf of the Massachusetts High Technology Council. This week they urged the nine-member commission to weigh the "high-tech aptitude" of bases.

"These bases have developed deep roots with the neighboring universities, research institutions, and high-tech workforces," they wrote in Monday's Defense News, a weekly publication widely read by the military and defense industry. "In many cases, the experienced engineers and scientists will not follow the mission to other regions, which may not have the intellectual resources or critical mass of skilled workers to continue the critical research and development work."

Dixon and Fogleman do not name the two Bay State facilities in the article, but officials at the Massachusetts High Technology Council confirmed that the article was coordinated by its Defense Technology Initiative, set up last year to make the state's case to spare Hanscom and the Natick Army Research Center.

The article "makes the case for a different review of technical facilities than in previous rounds," said Cort Boulanger, vice president of the council.

Dixon and Fogleman also urged the commission to give particular attention to bases with the potential to grow and meet future needs. Last year Massachusetts approved a \$400 million plan to expand Hanscom, home to the Air Force's Electronic Systems Center and responsible for an estimated 5,000 jobs in the Boston area tied to the base's research and development activities.

The commission, made up of former lawmakers, retired military officers, and other former senior government officials, will review Rumsfeld's list and make a final report to President Bush in September. Bush must either accept or throw out the entire list.

The commissioners, in their first public hearing, received testimony yesterday from government specialists on the procedures they will have to follow. The panel will be able to take a base off the Pentagon list only if they can show that one of the primary criteria for shuttering or downsizing a base was not correctly measured: its value to the military and, ultimately, national security; potential costs savings; environmental ramifications; and the economic impact on states and cities.

"At many bases, the process of closing a base is nearly as simple as packing assets and reassigning military personnel," Dixon and Fogleman wrote. "But for technical acquisition facilities, research and development labs, and other nontraditional bases, moving the mission is much more complex."

Philadelphia Inquirer
May 5, 2005
Pg. 1

New Base Closings Could Hurt Region

By Henry J. Holcomb, Inquirer Staff Writer

The region is bracing for another BRAC attack.

The Pentagon's fifth "base realignment and closure," or BRAC, process is under way, and the list of targets for closure is expected to be made public next week.

Those who have studied the Defense Department's complex criteria believe that the prime closure risks here are the Willow Grove Naval Air Station and the Defense Supply Center, a 135-acre logistics campus at 700 Robbins St. in Northeast Philadelphia.

The Willow Grove complex employs 7,779 people, including contractors. The logistics center employs 5,680 people.

The hit list is being prepared in secret, more so than in past rounds, leaving even senior state and city officials wondering what to expect. "It is the most button-down process I've ever seen," Philadelphia Commerce Director Stephanie Naidoff said.

Philadelphia was the only major city to take big hits in each of the first four BRAC rounds, dating to 1988. In 1996, for example, it lost its naval base and shipyard, for 195 years a mainstay of South Philadelphia's life and economy.

"Philadelphia has been absolutely pounded in previous BRAC rounds," said Peter Longstreth, president of the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corp., the city economic-development arm that deals with military issues.

Pennsylvania is second only to California in terms of BRAC cuts' economic impact.

"Without a doubt, we've paid our fair share. We've lost 16,000 jobs," said Adrian R. King Jr., Gov. Rendell's point person in the fight against more cuts.

There are 12 remaining Defense Department facilities in Pennsylvania, employing 60,000 people.

New Jersey officials have been working to defend the state's three major installations - Fort Dix, McGuire Air Force Base, and Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station - which, as acting Gov. Richard J. Codey put it, "have a tremendous economic impact" on the state.

Rendell, who was mayor when Philadelphia lost its naval base and other facilities, has been working for several years to avoid more hits.

After years of struggle, for example, the Port of Philadelphia was designated a strategic military seaport in 2002, adding to the importance of installations such as the Letterkenny Army Depot in Franklin County.

Pennsylvania no longer has an active-duty military base. "But we play a critical role in supporting war fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan," said King, the governor's deputy chief of staff and director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

In Northeast Philadelphia, skilled workers handle mission-critical supply tasks, and Letterkenny "performs very critical work in retrofitting equipment with armor and in creating armor kits that can be shipped to the battlefield," King said.

Both Letterkenny and the Tobyhanna Army Depot in Monroe County perform vital military electronics work, King added.

The Willow Grove facility, with its fighter and electronic-surveillance aircraft, is crucial to the security of Philadelphia and New York, King said.

In short, Rendell is prepared to argue that closing Pennsylvania bases would pose risks to troops overseas and homeland security.

Officials say they have been treating the military like a prized civilian employer for several years.

Rendell, for example, dispatched his top environmental official to handle a permitting issue at the Naval Surface Warfare Center, the engineering station that is still active at the old Philadelphia Navy Base.

He dispatched his transportation secretary to help improve security at Willow Grove.

Pennsylvania's General Assembly, meanwhile, has appropriated \$4.5 million to train and support local groups defending their bases, to fund studies that counter closure arguments, and to hire lobbyists.

After Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld announces the bases targeted for closure, members of the BRAC commission will visit each base and hear arguments for and against its proposals.

By July 1, the federal General Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, must release its evaluation of the list.

"It is a very treacherous process," King, the governor's aide, said. "Even if a base is not on the list initially, there is still a great risk. Others may go after what we have to justify keeping what they have."

The final list is due on President Bush's desk by Sept. 8. The President must approve the whole list or return it to the commission for more work.

When Congress finally gets the list, it has 45 days to accept or reject the proposal. To insulate lawmakers from political fallout, the law forbids approving some closures and rejecting others.

Star-Ledger, The (Newark, NJ)
May 4, 2005

Suspense starts for U.S. bases and hosts Closure panel opens with a solemn note

By Liz Sodoti

As his panel met for the first time yesterday, the chairman of the commission that will help determine which U.S. military **bases** will close noted that the decisions will be "tsunamis" to the **bases'** surrounding communities.

Anthony Principi said the nine-member **Base Closure and Realignment** Commission will try to provide a "clear-eyed reality check" of the Pentagon's list of **bases** that should be shuttered or downsized. The Defense Department is expected to release that list next week.

Underscoring the impact of the decisions, the General Accountability Office issued a report yesterday stating that communities that have lost **bases** in previous years "are continuing to recover" and have regained about 85 percent of the civilian jobs that were lost.

While the report by the GAO, an investigative arm of Congress, said most affected communities are faring well compared with the average U.S. unemployment and income-growth rates, it added, "The recovery process has not necessarily been easy."

Principi told commissioners, congressional staffers, lobbyists and reporters jammed into a Capitol Hill hearing room, "The ripples of the proposals the secretary of defense will soon present to our nation, and to us, will be tsunamis in the communities they hit."

The Pentagon is putting the finishing touches on its list of which of the country's 425 major military installations to close or downsize. It is seeking to save billions of dollars a year by eliminating infrastructure it says was needed during the Cold War but has become obsolete as terrorism has become the prominent threat.

Closures in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 eliminated or realigned 451 installations, including 97 major ones, according to the GAO report. The changes saved about \$29 billion through 2003 and have saved about \$7 billion annually since, the GAO said.

Defense analysts originally expected **closures** to outnumber downsizings during this upcoming round. But defense officials recently have suggested fewer **bases** than expected will be eliminated, to accommodate the 70,000 troops and 100,000 dependents based in Europe who are slated to return to the United States.

New Jersey has seven military installations, some of which, including Picatinny Arsenal in Morris County, barely averted **closure** in the past, after intense lobbying. The state lost the Military Ocean Terminal in Bayonne in 1995.

The commission is to vote whether to accept or deny the Pentagon's recommendations. It can remove a facility from the list only if it finds that the Pentagon deviated from the criteria. To add a facility to the list, the commission must give Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld 15 days to explain why the Pentagon hadn't slated it for **closure** or downsizing.

The commission must send its report to President Bush by Sept. 8. The president will review the report and order revisions if needed. Congress then has to accept or reject the report in its entirety. The **closures** and downsizings would occur over five years starting in 2006.

Miami Herald, The (FL)
May 4, 2005

CHAIRMAN: BASE CLOSINGS HIT LIKE TSUNAMIS

By Dave Montgomery

The economic effects of closing a U.S. military **base** can hit nearby cities and towns like a tsunami, the chairman of a **base**-closing and **realignment** commission said Tuesday as the commission began a four-month review to determine the future of scores of **bases**.

The nine-member commission's heavy lifting starts within the next 12 days after the Pentagon submits its recommendations for closing or restructuring **bases** that it has decided no longer meet the nation's long-term military needs. The deadline for the Pentagon report is May 16, but it could be released by early next week.

'PROFOUND EFFECTS'

“The words ‘**closure**’ and ‘**realignment**’ are easy to write on paper, but they have profound effects on communities,” said Anthony Principi, the commission’s chairman. “The ripples of the proposals the secretary of defense will soon present to our nation, and to us, will be tsunamis in the communities they hit.”

Communities nationwide have been lobbying feverishly to protect their **bases** and will accelerate their campaigns as the commission conducts hearings and visits **bases**. Texas, California, Florida, Georgia and North and South Dakota are among those with aggressive save-our-**base** campaigns.

Principi, a former Veteran Affairs secretary, said the panel faces “daunting challenges,” but he promised “independent, fair and equitable” deliberations. The commission must prepare its report for President Bush by Sept. 8. The president then will review it and can order revisions. Finally, Congress must accept or reject the report in its entirety.

The commission’s fundamental assignment is to review the Pentagon **base**-closing list. Principi said the review will be an “unbiased assessment” and “a clear-eyed reality check.” The nine commissioners can remove **bases** from the list by a simple five-vote majority or add **bases** with a seven-vote super majority.

Previous **base**-closing commissions have accepted 85 percent of the Pentagon’s recommendations.

The 2005 effort is the latest of five **base**-closing rounds that have shuttered 97 major **bases** and hundreds of smaller installations since 1988 for a net savings of nearly \$28 billion. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, in pressing for further reductions, wants to cut or realign as many as 25 percent of the estimated 450 remaining **bases**.

CIRCLED WAGONS

Political leaders in virtually every state have organized extensive **base**-protection efforts, touting the merits of potentially endangered installations to Congress and the Pentagon.

Rumsfeld has acknowledged that the planned return of more than 70,000 U.S. troops from overseas **bases** in Asia and Europe could spare some domestic **bases** from **closure**.

An overseas **basing** commission has been conducting a yearlong study of U.S. troop needs abroad and will present its recommendations on Monday.

Although most communities fear the potential economic loss from the **base** closings, Barry Holman, an official for the Government Accountability Office, told commission members that most communities that lost **bases** in previous rounds are recovering. Nearly 85 percent of civilian jobs on shuttered **bases** have since been replaced through redevelopment of the properties, he said.

A threat by Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich to resist the **closure** of National Guard **bases** in his state could complicate the commission’s work.

Daily News of Los Angeles (CA)
May 4, 2005

ARNOLD: KEEP BASES OPEN - GOVERNOR SAYS STATE CAN HELP PENTAGON

By Jim Skeen

EDWARDS AIR FORCE **BASE** - With the Defense Department's recommendations for **bases** to close coming next week, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger made one last pitch to protect California's military installations.

In letters to President Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission Chairman Anthony Principi, Schwarzenegger said California can help the Pentagon create a leaner, more efficient military.

The letters were signed by every member of the state's congressional delegation.

``California is truly unique in its integrated combination of the nation's best war fighting capabilities, training ranges, research and testing centers, and military schools," Schwarzenegger said in the letters. ``Together with our academic centers and defense industry, the state offers more support than any other location for joint operations success and defense transformation."

The Schwarzenegger letter also cited California **bases'** cooperation with other **bases** in the U.S. Southwest, a theme that Antelope Valley leaders have been promoting for years. This interconnection provides a ``unique jointness of operations and training," Schwarzenegger said.

``Further, this integrated capability provides for continued success in recruiting and retention, in developing and providing technologies to sustain our troops and their operations, and in enhancing our country's space and intelligence operations," Schwarzenegger wrote.

The Schwarzenegger letter was sent the same day the 2005 **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission officially began its work as Commission Chairman Principi administered the oath of office to his eight fellow commissioners.

By law, the Defense Department must release its list of recommended **closures** by May 16. Rumsfeld has not announced when the list would be released, but a department spokesman said staff is planning on a Friday, May 13, release.

There are indications, however, that a ``Friday-the-13th" release is being reconsidered and that the list could come out as early as Tuesday, officials said.

After evaluating the Defense Department's recommendations, the BRAC commission will submit its own list to the president for review and approval and then to Congress. Congress must accept or reject the list in its entirety - not add or delete **bases** individually.

In a related matter, the Antelope Valley Board of Trade is seeking revisions in a report by the governor's California Council on **Base** Support and Retention on how to protect the state's **bases**. Board of Trade representatives said the report errs in descriptions of Edwards Air Force **Base**.

The Board of Trade said the report mistakenly lists Edwards' employment at about half of its true payroll of 12,270 workers. The board is also asking that the report note Edwards' variety of tenants, including NASA and Marine Corps units, and the availability of 50,000 acres to accommodate future tenants and missions.

The board also expressed concern about the report affiliating the R- 2508 airspace, the restricted airspace that runs from Edwards north into the Sierra Nevada, as being run by the Army's Fort Irwin. The airspace is run jointly by the commanders of Edwards, Fort Irwin, and the China Lake Naval Air Warfare Center.

“This is a resource document that will be on file for a long time,” said Lew Stults, president of the Board of Trade. “We want it corrected.”

Daily News of Los Angeles (CA)
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LOCAL LEADERS OUT TO KEEP BASE IN L.A. - POWERFUL COMMITTEE HEAD PROMISES TO HELP IN HOUSE

By Lisa Friedman

WASHINGTON - San Fernando Valley business leaders pounded the halls of Capitol Hill on Tuesday for any good news they could find about the fate of Los Angeles Air Force **Base** in the pending round of military **base closures**.

They found some in House Appropriations Chairman Jerry Lewis, R-Redlands, who said protecting the **base** near Los Angeles International Airport is one of his top priorities.

But members of the Valley Industry and Commerce Association wrapped up a heavy lobbying day still steeling themselves for the worst when the Pentagon releases its list of **bases** slated for closure or reduction next week.

“I think Los Angeles Air Force **Base** is in grave danger of being on that list,” said John Anderson, VICA's point person on **base closures**.

Separate lobbying trips by members of VICA and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors came as the nine-member **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission held its first public meeting. That BRAC session was followed by closed briefings from intelligence officials and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs.

In seeking to cut back or consolidate up to 25 percent of installations and save as much as \$7 billion, the Pentagon is considering closing Los Angeles AFB and shifting its work to Colorado or New Mexico.

Opponents say the move would threaten 50,000 jobs in Los Angeles County, end several national security programs and spark a massive military brain drain.

Noting that California lost half its military installations in the last round of **base closures**, VICA Chairman Martin Cooper said protecting **bases** now is “one of the cases where the California delegation is pretty well in sync with one another.”

Anderson said he hopes the unity holds after the Pentagon releases its list. If it contains more than one California **base**, he warned, the harmony could easily dissolve.

The BRAC commissioners will have until Sept. 23 to review the Pentagon's choices. The commission will then forward its own list to the president, who has until Oct. 20 to endorse the entire list or return it to the commission for review.

Within 45 days of the president's approval, Congress has the right to object to the list. If Congress takes no action, the closings will be final.

VICA officials also attended a White House briefing on Social Security, and they met with lobbyists for the city of Los Angeles and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to discuss homeland-security funding and highway spending.

Rep. Brad Sherman, D-Los Angeles, told the group not to expect a federal windfall for the 405/101 interchange in a transportation spending bill soon hitting the Senate.

The freeway interchange, one of the most congested in the U.S., may get some federal funding, but not the \$2 billion to \$3 billion that advocates say the interchange would need.

Instead, he said, Congress is more likely to fund the Alameda Corridor East project to improve rail lines between the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and Pomona. Supporters are seeking \$900 million, and Sherman said if it comes down to a competition between the two projects, the Alameda Corridor East will win.

Day, The (New London, CT)
May 4, 2005

Group Questions BRAC Report Federal document touts savings from - closing down bases

By Robert A. Hamilton

A new congressional report concludes that four rounds of **base closures** in the 1980s and '90s have gone largely on schedule and are saving the military about \$7 billion a year, while the communities around them have replaced most of the civilian jobs that were lost.

But the head of a local group fighting to keep the Naval Submarine **Base** off the **Base Realignment and Closure**, or BRAC, list this year said he's not comforted by any of the findings.

"Our experience in the '90s, with regard to how numbers were used in the BRAC process, left us very suspicious of the accuracy and fidelity of the numbers that are touted," said John C. Markowicz, chairman of the Subase **Realignment** Coalition.

For instance, the report by the Government Accountability Office, a congressional investigative agency, found that about 85 percent of local Department of Defense civilian jobs that were lost in prior BRACs have been replaced.

During the seven-month period ending July 31, 2004, it found that in 62 communities affected by an earlier BRAC, 43 had unemployment rates lower than the national average. Four of the communities that were above the average had unemployment rates higher than 10 percent, with a high of 15.8 percent in Merced County, Calif., where the Castle Air Force **Base** was closed.

But Markowicz said the GAO report is only measuring part of the impact.

"Civilian jobs - it's very important to remember that they're only looking at civilian jobs," Markowicz said. In fact, if the sub **base** is closed it would mean the elimination of about 2,400 civilian and contractor jobs, but 7,500 sailors and officers would no longer be spending paychecks locally.

"From an overall economic-impact standpoint, you have to talk about military jobs that no longer exist in that community," Markowicz said.

On Tuesday, Anthony Principi, chairman of the BRAC commission, told commissioners, congressional staffers, lobbyists and reporters jammed into a Capitol Hill hearing room, "The ripples of the proposals the secretary of Defense will soon present to our nation, and to us, will be tsunamis in the communities they hit."

He said the nine-member commission will try to provide a "clear-eyed reality check" of the Pentagon's list of domestic defense installations that should be shuttered or downsized.

Principi swore in the eight other commission members Tuesday. The panelists, made up largely of retired military officers chosen by the president and congressional leaders, spent much of the first meeting listening to analysts give them a history lesson of the **base**-closing process and a status report of current national security threats.

* The 36-page report, "Military **Base Closures**: Observations on Prior and Current BRAC Rounds," also concludes that "BRAC recommendations were implemented within the 6-year period mandated by law."

It said about 72 percent, or 364,000 acres, out of 504,000 acres targeted by BRACs in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 have been transferred to other agencies or owners, with the remainder tied up by environmental cleanup requirements.

"I would say that a significant number were implemented, but their own statements are in conflict - they haven't done it all," Markowicz noted. In California, for instance, only about 15 percent of the 28,000-acre Fort Ord has been cleaned of unexploded Army ordnance, 14 years after a BRAC commission ordered it shut down.

The GAO report also said that based on estimates provided by the Pentagon, the 499 **base closures** ordered in the earlier four rounds have generated a total of \$29 billion in savings, and the military is saving \$7 billion a year now.

"These savings actually reflect cost avoidances, that is, money that DOD would likely have needed to operate BRAC **bases** had they remained open," the report said. But it cautions that the Department of Defense estimates are usually "rough approximations," and the Pentagon's accounting systems are not designed to identify and track savings from **base closures**.

But Markowicz said a full review of a 1991 Navy recommendation to scale back operations at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in New London found that the costs were seriously understated and the savings seriously overestimated.

In addition, while the Navy argued in the 1991 BRAC that a smaller NUWC would be viable in New London, in 1995 it won approval to shut the rest of the installation down because it was inefficient.

Some of those problems in the early BRAC led his group and others to request a full outside review of any savings estimates, to make sure no other decisions are based on flawed data, Markowicz said.

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Guard, returning troops are issues

By Otto Kreisher
COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON – The Base Realignment and Closure commissioners plunged into the complex rules yesterday that will shape their work and encountered unresolved questions on the Pentagon's basing plans and whether governors can veto changes affecting National Guard units.

The nine commissioners voiced uncertainty about how the plans to bring 70,000 troops back from overseas bases will affect their decisions on closing or otherwise adjusting installations in the United States.

Base-closing experts from the Government Accountability Office and the Congressional Research Service said Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is supposed to account for the returning troops in making the recommendations on base changes that he will send to the commission next week.

Two of the commissioners asked about the claim by Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and members of the state's congressional delegation that the Pentagon cannot close a National Guard facility without the permission of the state's governor.

The Illinois officials are nervous about the fate of the 183rd Fighter Wing at the Springfield Capital Airport and the 182nd Airlift Wing at the Greater Peoria Regional Airport, both Air National Guard units.

Commission Chairman Anthony J. Principi told reporters the dispute was "an issue for the lawyers to decide" and would not stop the panel from continuing its work.

The Pentagon sent a letter to the Illinois officials on April 12 telling them the closure process would follow "all applicable laws" but to be "truly comprehensive" it had to deal with the facilities used by "the reserve component," which includes the Guard.

In opening the commission's first hearing, Principi told his colleagues that the upcoming work would challenge their intellect, their energy and "our emotions as we face our fellow citizens knowing our decisions will profoundly affect their lives and the future of their communities."

He also challenged the commissioners to "set aside concerns of partisanship and parochialism" to make decisions based only on the criteria established by the Base Realignment and Closure law.

And he cautioned them that the resources to support the armed services are limited. "Every dollar consumed in redundant, unnecessary, obsolete, inappropriately designed or located infrastructure is a dollar not available" for the training, munitions or weapons that could save service members' lives and win battles.

Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)
May 4, 2005

Officials tour base ahead of closure list California's advocates vow to fight for keeping state's military assets

By BOB CHRISTIE

RIDGECREST -- A delegation from California's military base retention commission toured China Lake Naval Weapons Center Wednesday, later saying that the base was key to the nation's military strength.

The visit comes just a week before Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is set to recommend a list of bases to be closed or realigned. The list could target as many as 20 percent of the nation's bases and California's 35 major active duty bases could be particularly vulnerable.

The four-person delegation from the state Council on Base Support and Retention was led by co-chairs Leon Panetta, a former congressman and the chief of staff for President Clinton, and sports executive Donna Tuttle. They were accompanied by Assemblyman Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield.

At a press briefing after the tour McCarthy said the state is much better prepared to fend off major base closures now than in the previous four rounds of closures because the state's politicians have united to fight proposed closures throughout the state. California lost 26 major bases during closures since 1988 in which each base had to fight for its own survival.

"What is different this year is that California is prepared," McCarthy said. "May 16 they come out with the list but that's not the end of it."

The list of Rumsfeld's recommended closures is due by May 16 but it is expected by midweek.

A base closure commission will then review the list, make changes and present it to President Bush. Bush will then approve or reject it.

If approved by Bush, the list will take effect unless Congress disapproves it by Nov. 7.

China Lake, a sister testing and development facility in Ventura and Edwards Air Force Base are exceptionally situated to work together in a triad of bases, Panetta said.

He and other commission members said closure of either of eastern Kern County's bases is considered unlikely. There is even a chance the bases could pick up more work and jobs under the realignment portion of the base closure process.

In the 1990s, Ridgecrest, a city of 28,000, shrunk in population from 37,000 as the Navy cut jobs. It would be virtually decimated if China Lake were closed because as many as 80 percent of the city's jobs are directly base related, said Phil Arnold, who has led a base support group since the mid-1990s.

But few here believe it is possible China Lake will be on the list because its sprawling test ranges and the restricted military airspace it oversees with Edwards are too valuable for training and testing.

Many even believe China Lake may come out a winner in the closure process.

Naval testing and development programs at several East Coast bases are eyed by many here, including Arnold, as fair game. Of course the same is true of the programs here, which are coveted by other states.

Nobody really knows how to guarantee China Lake won't be on the list, but they remain hopeful.

"The general hum of comments is optimistic," said Realtor Audrey Nelson. "Everyone is just saying 'Where else can you find a base like this?'"

State Sen. Roy Ashburn, interviewed by phone in Sacramento Wednesday, echoed the sentiments of McCarthy and Panetta that the state is much better prepared this time around.

With 274,000 jobs and \$8.8 billion in payroll at stake in the state, there are sure to be closures, but California has some strong backers.

The federal commission is led by a Californian, Ashburn said, and one other is on the Base Realignment and Closure commission. There are only nine members of the commission.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission's decisions are supposed to be free of political wrangling, but nearly every state is fighting public battles for their bases.

In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is using his clout to fight closures, and the congressional delegation and other officials are united behind efforts to prevent base closures in the state.

Still, some California bases will likely be closed, and Ashburn said help and recovery will come from the state to affected towns and cities.

At the town hall meeting Wednesday evening, nearly 100 local residents came out to hear a report. Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Bakersfield, sent a video message to the gathered townspeople.

"I cannot believe that we're not going to see continued growth in the high desert, both at China Lake and at Edwards," Thomas said. "We're to have plenty of comfort when the list is rolled out."

Arnold, McCarthy and base retention members said they were prepared to battle for the best interest of the area.

"We're going to defend our gains and attack our losses," Arnold said.